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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Culture, Politics, and the Community Forestry Program in Nepal

By

© **Christopher Blair Tarnowski**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Arts**

DEPARTMENT OF **Anthropology**

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 1995

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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To Bruce Morrison,
with admiration, gratitude and affection

ABSTRACT

The Government of Nepal has initiated the Community Forestry Program in an effort to give full control and responsibility for the management of "community forests" to local people, those who depend upon forests for fodder, fuelwood and many other forest products.

This thesis examines the Community Forestry Program in terms of four key factors that have a strong influence on its outcome. They include: 1) the institutional and political framework; 2) the program's compatibility with the cultural institutions and social organization of Nepal's ethnic groups; 3) the design and implementation of the program, and ; 4) the impact of 'western' and 'Nepalese' values on development.

Although there are many positive attributes to the program, there is, however, cause for concern regarding the success of the program in terms of institutional difficulties, program flexibility, and development ethos.

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As is so often the case, there are a great many people who have contributed in a variety of ways to the product that fills these pages. Some have made what may seem to be only a small contribution, yet all have had a lasting impact. To all of these people I offer my deepest appreciation and gratitude.

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INTRODUCTION

Nepal's Community Forestry Program is a relatively new program, having only been given formal recognition in 1978. It's primary objective is to involve local people, those who depend upon forests for fodder, fuelwood and many other forest products, in all aspects of forest management. The Government of Nepal, through the program, is thus attempting to encourage local people to organize themselves, in what are called "user groups", and become active in the planning, implementation, and decision-making process of forest management. In essence, the program seeks to give full control and responsibility for the management of "community forests" to local "user groups". At present however, many working in community forestry remain concerned about several issues affecting the successful implementation of the program. This thesis then serves to contribute to what remains a highly salient topic in development in Nepal.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the key factors that have a bearing on the success of Nepal's Community Forestry Program. Four main variables have been identified as most important and will be considered in an effort to analyze how they affect the program's success or failure. As well, each of these variables will serve as the basis of the four chapters in the thesis. They include: 1) the institutional and political framework - the essential governmental organizations, and their history and development; 2) the program's compatibility with the cultural institutions and social organization of Nepal's ethnic groups; 3) the design and implementation of the program, and ; 4) the impact of values on development, including those inherent in both western development ideology and in the 'Nepalese ideological system'.

As an understanding of Nepal's institutional framework is dependent upon an equal understanding of the factors that have influenced its development, Chapter One will address the more important political and religious aspects of Nepalese history. One of the most important of these factors is Hinduism and its role in introducing hierarchical caste principles that have served to support a situation where high-caste Hindus have become the dominant political, religious, and economic force in Nepali society. The chapter will also cover a number of other major political events that have come to shape the government and its institutions and which provide an insight into possible trends in Nepali politics.

Chapter Two will explore the anthropological literature on Nepal to ascertain what information is available which might help to determine the social "compatibility" of a development program such as community forestry. This will be done through a historical review of the anthropological types of information collected as well as the types of studies that have been done. In examining the growth of research since the 1970s, the discussion will focus on the greater interest given to more detailed issues and theoretical perspectives, as well as the increasing anthropological attention to, and involvement in, development and other applied issues. One of the more important contributions of much of the ethnographic research was the documentation of Nepal's immense ethnic and cultural diversity. Because of the potential importance this diversity has on the design and outcome of development, of any kind, an overview of Nepal's main ethnic groups, some of the general ethnographic information on them, and the available research with regard to forest use will be provided.

The Community Forestry Program is the subject of Chapter Three. The various issues and development concerns that shaped Nepal's community forestry approach and its eventual focus on 'people-centered' forest management will be discussed. As well, Nepal's approach to both forestry and community forestry will be addressed, along with the numerous forest management policies and acts that the government has enacted since its interest in forest development took shape in the 1950s. Because of community forestry's unique approach to forest management, which places local people who depend on forests and forest products at the core of the program, and thereby relies to a large degree on local level (or 'indigenous') management strategies, a comparison with the 'traditional' forestry paradigm will be given, as will a review of some of the more important results of research on indigenous systems of forest management. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of some of the implementation problems that affect the success of community forestry at a variety of levels in the implementation process.

The final chapter, will examine the important role that values have in affecting the success of the Community Forestry Program. Through foreign aid and other forms of influence, external (primarily 'western') values have not only become an inherent part of development but they may have a quite significant affect on the aims, methods and results of a variety of development programs in Nepal. Similarly, it has also been argued that the particular set of values, attitudes and practices, which predominate among the elite levels of society, and which have been identified as "Brahmanism", may have a critical impact on development efforts in Nepal. These issues will be examined as part of a review of the two most important critiques of development in Nepal; Eugene Mihaly's *Foreign Aid and Development in Nepal* (1965) and Dor Bahadur Bista's *Fatalism and Development: Nepal's Struggle for Modernization* (1991).

Methodology

The information used to prepare this thesis was derived from a number of sources including books, scholarly articles, conference proceedings, government documents, unpublished papers, personal interviews, telephone conversations, and casual conversations.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORY, POLITICS AND RELIGION

Introduction

Similar to many development projects in Nepal, the Community Forestry Program is a government administered program. An understanding of Nepali politics and, in particular, the administration - in addition to the factors that have shaped it - is therefore, an important component in examining the likely success of community forestry in Nepal. This chapter, then, will endeavor to examine those factors that have had the greatest bearing on Nepali politics and, by extension, that are likely to have the greatest impact on development.

This chapter begins with Nepal's exposure to Buddhism and Hinduism and their early influence on Nepali society through to the end of the 18th century. The discussion then focuses on the main political events during the periods of Shah rule (1770-1846), Rana rule (1846-1950), and the period since the restoration of the Monarchy in 1950. Of particular concern are the roles that Hinduism, the introduction of hierarchical caste principles, and land tenure and policy have had in influencing the government and its administration, as well as the political and social structure of society, throughout Nepali history.

Prehistory and Early History

Nepal has long been a crossroads for Buddhist and Hindu influences. Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautama Buddha in the Nepal Terai, and several other areas in the Nepal valley have figured prominently in Buddhist traditions. As well, such ancient Hindu classics as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* suggest that Nepal had a close relationship with the Indo-Aryan societies of northern India as far back as the first millennium B.C. (Rose & Scholz 1980: 11).

During this early period the cultures of the northern Gangetic plains had a particularly important impact upon Nepal. This impact spans several centuries and affects numerous facets of Nepalese society. Nepal's earliest association with, or introduction to, (Mahayana[1]) Buddhism is attributed to the Sakyas of northern India (Bista 1991: 20). They are also credited with the creation of the Buddhist landmarks that highlight the beginning of 'Nepal's cultural history.'

---

[1] Mahayana is a branch of Buddhism that was developed from the earlier Hinayana form. It is based on a somewhat different spiritual ideal, one which is based more on the example of Buddha than on his specific statements. It emphasizes the fundamental oneness of all beings, from which it follows that the liberation from rebirth (samsara) of any particular being is incomplete until all beings have achieved this liberation.

However, as important as Buddhism has been for Nepal's cultural identity , it is Hinduism (and in particular, 'Brahmanism'[2]) that has been most influential in shaping the political sphere of Nepalese society. The early Buddhist influences of the Sakyas were followed by Hindu influences introduced by the Licchavis and Guptas. Like the Sakyas, the Licchavis, one of the first 'Nepali dynasties,' were of Indian (i.e., plains) origin. An ancient and significant family in Indian history on the Gangetic plains, they arose to prominence in the sixth and seventh centuries B.C. (Regmi 1960: 25-6). About the first century A.D., the Licchavis established themselves as the rulers of the Nepal Valley, a position they held, with brief interruptions from the Guptas, until about the tenth century. Although much of the literature on Nepal's early history is imprecise, it is the Licchavis that have also been attributed with establishing the precedent for what became the norm in both the Nepal valley and the central Himalayan hills thereafter - the rule of Hindu kings claiming high-caste Indian origin over populations that included large non-Indo-Aryan and non-Hindu elements (Rose & Scholz 1980: 11). Prior to, and even during Licchavi rule, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the region were not of Indo-Aryan origin. Indeed, it was only with the Muslim invasions of the subcontinent from the eleventh to the sixteenth century A.D. that large-scale migrations from the plains into the hills occurred, gradually transforming the ethnic composition of all but the northern fringe of the central Himalayas in the process (Rose and Scholz 1980: 11).

Despite this ever changing ethnic composition, it was the Nepali Guptas, however, that have been given responsibility for introducing Vaisnavic[3] culture, around the fourth century A.D., and installing the Narayana (Vishnu) shrines at the four corners of the valley (Bista 1991:20). Perhaps more importantly, by introducing Vaisnavism, the Guptas were partly responsible for the introduction of the varna, or caste, system. Nepali Shaivism, the Hindu tradition predominantly followed in Nepal, was not closely connected to the varna (caste) system, so that it was only with the introduction of Vaisnavism that Nepalis were exposed to this particular concept - a concept that would eventually lead to religious legitimation of political rule by high caste Hindus and subsequently to the current political and administrative structure favoring high-caste Hindus (Bista 1991: 20). Vaisnavism, however, was a religion concentrated among an elite group, whereas the majority remained primarily Shiva-worshipping and non-caste. Even the Licchavi Kings were Shaivites. Consequently, under the Guptas, there were only a small number of Brahmins, while the Gupta kings took the title of Kshatriya (Rajput or 'warrior caste'). Thus, with only a small, highly concentrated number of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, coupled with very little effort to include the majority of the population within the caste system, it remained a localized, isolated and exotic tool of the elite (Bista 1991: 21).

---

[2] Following the basic argument in Bista's (1991) *Fatalism and Development*, Brahmanism in this thesis is meant to refer to the set of values, attitudes, and behavior common to those of high castes within the political and administrative apparatus who subscribe to an outlook consisting of fatalism and an hierarchical orientation. This set of values, and the behavior associated with it, are by no means exclusive to Hindus of high-caste or, for that matter, of low-caste In the same manner as Bista, this reference is not meant as a criticism or critique of Hinduism nor is it intended to be an attack on those who possess a Brahman name. Rather, it is used by Bista to describe and explain how a particular set of values, attitudes, and behavior have come to influence foreign aid and development in Nepal. Brahmanism and its affects on development, specifically as it pertains to the efficacy of the Community Forestry Program in Nepal, is the subject of Chapter 4.

[3] Vaisnavism is a branch or sect of Hinduism in which its followers are devoted to Vishnu, one of the three major Hindu gods. Although the majority of Indian Hindus are Vaishnavites, the Hinduism of Nepal is primarily, though not exclusively, Shaivite. And though the Guptas are credited with introducing Vaisnavic culture into the region, several other Hindu sites predate even their arrival.

Despite the introduction of Vaisnavism, and the continued prominence of Shaivism, Buddhism maintained its importance throughout the region in this early period. Licchavi rulers, for instance, though predominantly Hindu, were highly influenced by Mahayana Buddhism (which was also prevalent in north India at the time) and in the indigenous development of the Vajrayana forms of Buddhism[4]. Indeed, one of the greatest distinguishing characteristics of Nepalese culture has been the synthesis of Hindu and Buddhist, as well as animistic, religious forms - a synthesis that has spanned several centuries and led to a type of religious flexibility relatively uncommon in the rest of the world. For example, the presence of shrines to Shiva and a Tantric deity, within the grounds of a single monastery in Patan, typifies this religious syncretism. Nevertheless, this religious flexibility began to change with the arrival of an increasing number of high caste Hindus late in the first millennium A.D. - although it was not until well into the second millennium, during the Malla Period, that Hinduism and the caste system gained political significance.

Between the fifth and seventh centuries A.D., during the period when the Licchavi dynasty was at its height, a powerful unified kingdom emerged in Tibet and established its authority over large areas of central Asia, southwestern China, parts of Ladkh, Sikkim, and Bhutan to the south of the Himalayas, and, according to Tibetan (but not Nepali) traditions, over the Nepal valley. The Himalayan passes to the north of the valley were opened and extensive cultural, trade, and political relations were established. In the process Nepal was transformed from a relatively remote backwater into *the* major intellectual and commercial entrepôt between south and central Asia. As a result, Nepal has played a very prominent role in the spread of Buddhist culture, which was to eventually come to dominate the greater part of East Asia and Southeast Asia as well.

---

[4] Vajrayana Buddhism is an offshoot of Mahayana Buddhism, incorporating Buddhist and Hindu philosophical concepts. Although Vajrayana and Mahayana do not differ in basic beliefs, they do contrast with respect to Vajrayana's emphasis on Tantric religious symbolism.

Also during the Licchavi period, the hill areas to the east and west of the Nepal valley were also undergoing a significant process of change. Although the dates are still uncertain, it is believed that it was during this period that a number of ethnic communities such as the Limbus in eastern Nepal, various Tibetan groups in the north, the Magars and Gurungs in the central-western hills, and the Khasas in the far west established themselves in various areas of what is now Nepal. Significantly, all of these communities except the Khasas had tribal cultures that were more closely related, economically and culturally, to the Buddhist north[5] than to India or to the Nepal valley (Rose & Scholz 1980: 12).

The Malla Dynasty: 11th C.-1770

During this period a number of political and social changes began to take place in what is now Nepal, particularly in the hill areas to the south and west of the Kathmandu Valley. Between the 11th and 18th centuries, Nepal (or more precisely, the Kathmandu Valley) was under the rule of the Malla dynasty.[6] Although the precise origin of the Mallas is uncertain, it is believed that they, like the Licchavis, were Indian by descent and high-caste Hindu by self-identification (Rose & Scholz 1980: 12). However, the Licchavis and the Mallas differed significantly in their relationship with their largely Buddhist subjects. While the Licchavis had demonstrated a "judicious restraint" in imposing high-caste Hindu social codes and practices on the population, the Mallas were much more assertive. It is believed that early in the fourteenth century, King Jaya Sthiti Malla, advised by Maithili Brahmins from Bihar, introduced the first legal and social code strongly imbued with Brahmanic Hindu principles in the central Himalayas (Joshi & Rose 1970: 11-12). Under this code, non-Hindu groups like the Newar community in the valley, which at the time had a large Buddhist majority, were subdivided into numerous sub-castes (*jats*) and strictly enjoined to apply Hindu concepts of social interaction. In particular, this new social code provided a hierarchic model for other high-caste Hindu rulers in the hill areas outside the valley, many of whom also ruled over largely non-Hindu populations (Rose & Scholz 1980: 12-13). Even more important perhaps, the caste hierarchy was attractive because it enabled the Malla rulers to enforce a social stability ensuring the preservation of their present position, which as yet had not been fully secured or legitimized.

---

[5] At this time period, these tribal cultures would have been related to what was actually the *pre*-Buddhist shamanic traditions then in existence in the north: traditions that are at the foundation of the Tibetan (and Nepali) forms of Buddhism that would develop later.

[6] The usage of Nepal was mostly limited to referring to Kathmandu and the surrounding valley. Its use as a term for the entire country is relatively recent. In fact, in some Newari communities near to Kathmandu, the city is still commonly referred to as Nepal.

Concomitant with the changes being instituted by Malla rulers, the Muslim invasions of India led to the migration of a number of Hindu Indian elites - notably high-caste Brahmans and Kshatriyas (Rajputs), or Chetris - whose objective was not to establish new homogenous communities, as previous immigrants had done, but rather to assert their leadership and dominance over the tribal communities that were already living in the hills (Rose & Scholz 1980:14). Although they were relatively few in number, they quickly gained ascendancy in the hill states where they settled (Stiller 1975: 46). The most notable feature of this incursion, however, was that these newly arrived Hindus were particularly concerned with, and active in, the preservation of their religion and lifestyle. Their means of accomplishing this endeavor, was in part through conquest and partly "through intermarriage with and the gradual absorption of the existing hill tribal elite" (Rose & Scholz 1980: 14). The effectiveness of such a technique was to have not only immediate implications for political control but would prove valuable in the future during the Shah and Rana periods. Consequently, by the fifteenth century the greater part of the hill area to the west and south of the Nepal valley was ruled by dynasties claiming Kshatriya (Rajput) caste status, and were assisted by Brahmin advisors.

By the sixteenth century, however, this migration of high-caste Hindu elites into the hill area had led to the fragmentation of the Malla kingdom. According to Stiller, "the area where the Rajputs had their greatest impact was in the region of the Chaubisi and the Baisi Rajas" (1975: 63).[7] This impact was actually twofold. On the one hand, Rajput ascendancy greatly affected the religious consciousness of the people of the areas where they settled, as the period of Rajput emergence was characterized by progressive sanskritization (Stiller 1975: 64).[8] At the same time, their ascendancy led to the emergence of two confederations which, despite their diverse populations, eventually contained numerous hill principalities with similar elite structures.[9] The first of these, known as the Chaubisi Kingdom, or Confederation, emerged in the area to the west and south of the Nepal valley and contained twenty-four Rajput-ruled principalities. The other, containing twenty-two principalities in the Karnali region, became known as the Baisi Confederation. Although neither the Baisi nor Chaubisi Confederation proved to be an effective alliance system, they were indicative of the existence of a high-caste Hindu elite with a common political tradition and a sense of cultural identity (Stiller 1975: ??). As Stiller has emphasized, this shared Hindu elite structure and its position within the administrative system, combined with the practice of intermarrying extensively across political and social boundaries, would later prove to be a factor in Prithvi Narayan Shah's later success in unifying Nepal.

---

[7] The Chaubisi and Baisi Rajas were two confederations, consisting of 24 and 22 kingdoms, respectively.

[8] Sanskritization is the process by which low-caste Hindus and tribal groups aspire to high-caste status through the acquisition of the customs, rituals, ideology and way of life of Hindu culture and religion. Specifically, this process involves observing the basic rules and rituals relating to dietary restrictions, birth, marriage and death, and the acceptance of Brahman priests.

[9] Stiller (1975: 63) describes the Rajputs' acquisition of control in the principalities where they settled as a three-step process:

1. They were welcomed into a principality because of their talents and rank.
2. They made themselves indispensable in the affairs of the princedom.
3. They deposed the ruler, or disposed of him, and took the reins of government for themselves.

Early Land Tenure and Revenue Collection

As a predominately agricultural society, land and the revenue it generated has always been of utmost importance to local rulers. Indeed, from the outset, it was upon the value of land and the collection of tax revenue that the administrative structure was based - and from which it eventually evolved to produce the present bureaucracy. Furthermore, land was not only used as a means to provide local rulers with revenue but also functioned to support the administrative personnel. Characterizing the land tenure system prior to Shah unification, Stiller (1975: 17) has listed the following three main principles: 1) the various rulers owned all the land within their area of jurisdiction, 2) land as the principal source of wealth could not be allowed to remain unproductive, and 3) the possession of land was the sole means to wealth and prestige. Although intended to describe the situation leading up to and including Shah rule, they serve equally well to describe the general attitude towards land well into the twentieth century.

In essence, land served as the basis of wealth from both the individual's perspective as well as the local *rajas* (chiefdoms) or "kings" (Stiller 1975: 19). For the peasant, access to land was the source of one's livelihood. So long as peasants paid to the crown a rent or tax - equivalent to one-half of the produce of the land they held - and they continued to cultivate the land, they were given rights to this state-owned (*raikar*) land (Mahat et al. 1986: 225). For the state, land revenue was the principal source of income and was acquired through taxes levied against the peasants. Thus it was in the *rajas'* best interests to have as much land being cultivated as possible.

Other than being a tenant farmer on *raikar* lands, the only other opportunity available was to gain control of a parcel of land as a 'free-hold right' (Stiller 1975: 19). There were three ways in which this could be accomplished; through *jagir* grants, *birta* grants, or through the reclamation of forest or other waste land. *Jagir* grants referred to land assigned to a person who served the court in some official, civil, or military capacity. Such grants entitled the holder, known as a *Jagirdar* (estate owner or office bearer), to farm the specified plot(s) of land free from paying any taxes (Mahat et al. 1986: 225). If, however, the land was farmed by tenants, the *jagirdar* could extract the taxes (equivalent to half the crop) for himself. This form of grant remained valid only as long as the official concerned continued to serve the state (Stiller 1975: 20). *Birta* land grants were made by the ruler to a noble for some particular services in lieu of having to pay a salary, also giving to the holder the whole of the produce of the land. *Birta* land grants had no set time limit and were valid until recalled or confiscated (Stiller 1975: 20). The only other way to gain access to agricultural land was through the reclamation of forest or other land. As an incentive to bring previously forested land under cultivation, a tax exemption was granted, normally for three years (Mahat et al. 1986:225).

In addition to the heavy burden placed upon peasants by the amount of taxes or rent they were required to pay, they were also obligated to provide an unspecified amount of compulsory unpaid labor.[10] Such compulsory labor was used for the repair, maintenance, and construction of fortifications, bridges, roads, temples, and palaces.

The Unification of Nepal: 1770-1846

Weakened by familial dissension and widespread social and economic discontent, combined with Prithvi Narayan Shah's "all-out assault on the valley," the Malla dynasty - together with the other numerous principalities located throughout the region - were conquered in 1769 (Rose & Scholz 1980: 16). Following the conquest of the Kathmandu valley, and the transfer of the capital from Gorkha to Kathmandu in 1770, the Shah dynasty proceeded to conquer and unify the entire central Himalayas from Sikkim in the east to the Karnali region in the west.[11] In the process, the Gorkha rulers surpassed their predecessors in implementing administrative policies which organized all conquered peoples according to the principles of Hindu law (English 1985: 62). English states that in doing so, "they sought to reinforce their putative claims to high caste status and thereby justify their ownership of all the lands within their domain - traditionally the paramount privilege of all Hindu rajas" (1985: 62). In the end, the overall result of Gorkha unification was the establishment of a pattern of rule and a system of political control, which extended to land control, that would prevail relatively unchanged until the end of Rana rule.

Simply put, the expansion of control over the hill principalities by the Gorkha kingdom was accomplished through military and diplomatic means. Regardless of the manner in which unification was accomplished, the previous political divisions - the principalities, or '*rajyas*' - never completely lost their political significance (Joshi & Rose 1970: 5). Using the existing administrative structures of the principalities annexed, the Gorkhas thereby avoided any large-scale changes which might unnecessarily disturb the people of the conquered territories or lead to unrest or uprisings, which might in turn strengthen the already existing tendency towards fragmentation (Stiller 1975: 256). Even more importantly, a reliance upon existing administrative structures meant that problems associated with gaining control of local administrations were solved without burdening the Gorkha's own administration (Stiller 1975: 259). An additional advantage of this scheme was that it required administrators to consider local conditions and adapt to them. Unfortunately, decentralization was an unavoidable feature of the early structure of Gorkhali government at a time when strong centralized control was needed to solidify attempts at unification.

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[10] *Jhara* and *Rakam* were the most prevalent forms of compulsory and unpaid labor obligations. *Jhara* was an individual obligation imposed for a non-recurring or irregularly recurring purpose - as in the construction and repair of roads and bridges. *Rakam* was a compulsory labor obligation to be rendered as a specific service on a regular and inheritable basis and imposed on those holding certain land occupancy rights. The latter form of labor obligation was often abused by top government officials for their personal use. (Mahat et al. 1986: 228)

[11] At one point, attempts were made to penetrate into Kashmir in the western Himalayas (though this was later taken away by the British) and into Tibet

The Gorkha administrative structure was not overly elaborate. Indeed, it was designed to fulfill only two main functions: to collect taxes and extract corvée labor. Atop the central government was the king.[12] As the head of state the King performed several duties: he appointed and dismissed all those in Government service; he declared war, sued for peace and signed treaties; he prepared accounts of income and expenditure, allocated revenues , distributed favors and made grants of land to whomever he pleased (Regmi 1961: 279). As for the general responsibility of running the affairs of the state, the King was assisted by a collateral who served as *chautariya* (Prime Minister), four *kazis* (civil administrators who supervised all civil and military affairs), four *sardars* (military commanders, who only seldom managed civil affairs), two *kharidars* (secretaries in political and external departments), a chamberlain, and a treasurer (Stiller 1975: 275; Regmi 1961: 280-1). Also exercising a strong political influence were the members of the leading families of Gorkha, the *Thar Ghar*, even when not holding any of the administrative positions.[13]

Within the provincial administration, the key man was either the *sardar* or the governor. These men were in supreme control in the newly formed provinces, and were given wide discretionary power. The use of that power, however, was not without restraints. The greatest check on the activities of the *sardar* or *bada hakim* lay in the *pajani*; an annual review of an official's conduct in office, with the prospect of removal.

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[12] When of age, he ruled himself. If the king were a minor however, either his mother or his uncle or the nearest collateral ruled in the name of the Regency Council (Regmi 1961: 278).

[13] Besides the leading Brahman families this group included the leading fighting families of Gorkha (Stiller 1975: 275). - composed of leading elements of the different caste and ethnic groups that made up the population of the principality (Rose and Scholz 1980: 21)

As a result, it provided the central government (at least in theory) with a fairly effective means of control over administrators in the field.

Although the extent of rule commanded by the Gorkhas was unprecedented, it was not entirely encompassing. Unlike earlier attempts at unification in Nepal, the Gorkha's success differed in that the arrangements with the conquered principalities were based on strong control over the newly acquired states (Stiller 1975: 259). Much of this control was based on the demands placed on the local *rajas* or kings; demands enforced upon them by the threat of their dismissal. Although several of the principalities simply accepted Gorkhali rule in exchange for a certain degree of autonomy, in some cases, the raja(s) retained almost total control of the administration within their territory (Stiller 1975: 257). Thus, in several respects, Gorkha was forced to allow these local ruling elites to retain a relatively large degree of autonomy in controlling internal matters, at least initially. This was due to the relative isolation of many principalities and the fact that the authority of these local rajas was not easily eroded.[14] Nevertheless, in such cases, Gorkha's sovereignty and right to interfere in some issues had to be accepted. For instance, the raja was still required to pay a certain percentage of his revenue proceeds to Gorkha.

Not all principalities were compliant to Gorkha's demands. Some principalities resisted absorption into the Shah polity - either alone or in alliance with neighboring states (Rose and Scholz 1980: 19). For the most part, however, their success was limited and extremely short-lived. Either the alliances would collapse on their own, or the local ruling families in these states were eliminated or were forced to flee. In such cases, the eventual outcome was Shah rule over such principalities through appointed governors (*bada hakims*). Despite an absence of any effective local autonomy (as had existed for the rajas), the *bada hakims* were nevertheless, required to accept a working relationship with the local landed-elite families. Once again, this local elite was conceded a broad range of powers over social and economic policies so long as taxes were paid and order maintained. On the whole, however, Gorkha was concerned primarily with the larger issues of policy, the establishment of revenue rates, and the use of revenue and the *pajani*. Thus, administratively, local matters were left almost entirely in the *bada hakim's* hands (Stiller 1975: 264).

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[14] It has been observed that in some cases, this authority was so strong that it was only abolished as a consequence of the gradual expansion of the central administration, which culminated in the 1960s. Rose and Scholz (1980: 18) attribute this delay in integration as characteristic of the "the patience and care with which the national government expanded its influence and control over regions that had alternate ethnic, religious, or historical forms of identification."

Yet despite the initial working relationship between the Gorkhali ruler and the conquered principalities (in which the government in Kathmandu was required to concede to local autonomy), efforts were made to foster greater centralization and uniformity. In particular, the central government, as it was emerging at the time, cautiously extended its influence on such issues as land tenure, the legal code, and a variety of social customs. As the capital was transferred from Gorkha to Kathmandu, it involved the construction of a new political and administrative system.

One of the major outcomes of this political transformation was that it produced significant changes in the elite structure at the highest levels throughout Nepal (Rose and Scholz 1980: 21). The old Gorkha system had been based upon interactions between a comparatively intimate elite group, the *Thar Ghar* - consisting of the "six families." As part of this system and in terms of the traditional political process, any major decision required extensive consultation with the *Thar Ghar*. This was also an important factor underlying the broad-based support extended to the Gorkha rulers.

The new Shah court in Kathmandu, as it emerged in the late eighteenth century, however, was much different in composition. And moreover, it operated on some novel rules of procedure. Although initially the new court was dominated by families from Gorkha, this group was quickly replaced by high-caste families (but usually not the ruling family) from other principalities (Rose and Scholz 1980: 21). The new courtier class of Kathmandu was composed exclusively of high-caste Hindu (Rajput and Brahmin) families. Most important, this group was much less representative of the population of Nepal than the *Thar Ghar* had been of Gorkha. Of those rulers who were displaced with the Shah conquest, most were compensated with small grants of land, called *manachamal* (literally, 'a measure of rice'; Caplan 1975: 17; English 1985: 67).[15]

Of the groups to lose their previous position of power, a most notable example is that of Newar elite. Previously they had managed the affairs of the Malla courts, but were initially excluded from the Gorkha system. They were eventually accommodated, however, as they possessed administrative and economic skills generally lacking among the Brahmans and Kshatriyas (Rose and Scholz 1980: 24). Eventually, the Newars came to hold a virtual monopoly on key second-level positions in the central administration and were often vital in the decision-making process. In fact, until the early 1970s all of the administrative posts were the exclusive domain of two Newar families, demonstrating the degree of political power they held.

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[15] These *manachamal* grants stipulated either that the raja could enjoy the cultivation rights and a degree of tax relief on these lands, or they would be assigned the taxes paid by the cultivators (Caplan 1975: 17).

Although after 1770, the previously important regional caste and ethnic elites came to exercise only a very minor role in court politics, they continued to be critically influential at the district level. In particular, these regional caste and ethnic elites were still able to veto (albeit, indirectly) certain kinds of decisions (e.g., those affecting land-tenure and taxation systems) through their capacity to obstruct and sabotage central-governmental policies at the implementation stage (Rose and Scholz 1980: 24). In order to gain the cooperation and support of these local elites, it became a common practice for the central leaders to grant trade monopolies and new lands to them. (With respect to the latter practice, not only was it to have an impact upon the distribution and concentration of land - in that it initiated a trend in unequal land holdings among a small group of elite - but it also affected forest cover directly as forest land was actively converted into land suitable for agriculture. Arguably this had an impact upon access to forest land and other resources and its control among a select group of elites.)

Land use policy under Shah rule was not unlike the previous attitudes of earlier rajas in that the main objective was to make the land as productive as possible and acquire as large a pool of revenue as could be extracted. Consequently, land use policy was aimed primarily at encouraging the conversion of land from forest to agricultural use in order to increase the tax base - much as it was during the Malla dynasty (Bajracharya 1983). As English has observed, in the early years of the Gorkha empire, "the *jagir* system promoted land reclamation, initiated the development of a rudimentary economic infrastructure, and financed and supplied a far-flung army while contributing to the stability and organization of Gorkhali rule" (1985: 68). Nevertheless, because *jagir* overlords and other revenue functionaries remained relatively independent of control from Kathmandu, they levied in-kind and corvée labor assessments far in excess of those sanctioned by the State. As well, *jagir* tenants continued to be obligated in providing their overlord with a fixed number of days of agricultural labor.

Also during the Shah period, two particularly notable features were occurring with respect to land use; the government was increasingly becoming alienated from its ownership of, and taxation rights over, the land, while significantly less *raikar* land was available to peasants at the same time that they were experiencing an ever-growing tax burden. As a result of the practice of assigning land to support the military, and the granting of jagir, and birta lands, not to mention the loss of land to rajyas (semi-autonomous feudal principalities), the land available to peasants from government-owned raikar lands was significantly reduced (Mahat et al. 1986). Combined with the tax incentives available for clearing forested land for cultivation, such policies led to further deforestation in the hills (Mahat et al. 1986; Bajracharya 1983). Not only would this have serious consequences for peasants but would also have a major impact upon forested land, unavoidably leading to (increased) deforestation. In addition to already existing land grants, new land grants were given increasingly to Brahmans and members of the military for services rendered. Of the revenue collecting appointments given to Brahmans, the majority were on a hereditary basis (English 1985: 66). In cases where the land was already occupied, such grantees were given the surplus above minimum subsistence needs - amounting essentially to another tax burden for peasants (Mahat et al. 1986: 226).

In contrast to the hill area to the west of Kathmandu, in which the principalities were essentially not unlike that of Gorkha, much of the hill area to the east was inhabited by 'tribal' communities (Rais, Limbus, Sherpas) with diffuse, decentralized political systems.[16] Moreover, the high-caste Hindu ruling families claiming plains origin that were so prevalent in the west were almost totally absent in the east - except in the southern Terai area (Rose & Scholz 1980: 19). Undoubtedly, this had an important impact upon the type of relationship the government in Kathmandu had with these groups; that is, this relationship differed significantly from that which the Shah's had with the rajya states in the west. Adhering to the practice of relying upon existing administrative systems, local tribal and clan leaders were integrated into the administrative hierarchy of the empire as revenue functionaries with hereditary privileges (English 1985: 69). Specifically, they were allowed to follow local customs regarding distribution of land and dispensing of justice, but were required to collect land revenues and assess labor tribute for public works (English 1985: 69). Few Tibeto-Burmans, however, were admitted to higher ranks in the Gorkhali administration - with the exception of the Newars (English 1985: 69).

Exemplifying the concessions accorded to several hill tribal groups, is the agreement reached with the communities in the Limbu area. As part of this agreement, the regional chieftains (*Subbas*) in the Limbu area were granted status as Kathmandu's representative in their districts. As such they were given a broader range of powers than those given to rajas, Bada Hakims, or sardars.[17] Of particular importance in terms of land tenure, these treaties also guaranteed the *kipat* (communal land ownership) tenure system, which was an integral part of the integrity of Limbu society and culture (Jones 1976a:

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[16] Early observers often refer to Nepal's various communities as 'tribes'. Usage has continued, albeit to a lesser degree in recent decades, but remains problematic. In South Asia, tribal societies in contrast to castes, are typically characterized as geographically localized, egalitarian and stateless, occupationally undifferentiated, and possessing some degree of socio-ritual autonomy and integrity (Holmberg 1989: 14) But as Holmberg argues, "several groups in the Nepal Himalayas, though, do not readily conform to this problematic construction" (1989: 14).

[17] Other ethnic groups, such as the Thakalis and Sherpas in the northern border area and the Tharus in the terai, were similarly allowed broad local autonomy under the general supervision of central government officials (Rose and Fisher 1970: 75).

64). Under the kipat tenure system no 'individual ownership' was involved, rather the land was held as part of the collective and would be allocated to individuals based on membership in the ethnic group. During the past two hundred years, however, the Limbu have witnessed the settlement of Hindus, especially Brahmans, and the subsequent alienation of much of their land as a result of indebtedness to high-caste Hindus. Whereas initially the immigrant Hindus who settled on kipat land were politically subordinate to the Limbu, the Limbu now find themselves in a position both politically and economically inferior to high-caste Hindus (Jones 1976a: 66; see Caplan 1970, 1975).

Throughout the period of Shah rule, the government faced escalating financial problems despite increases in land under cultivation. In order to combat these problems, the Shahs increased land taxes to 50-70 percent of the rice crop, established a direct relationship between the central government and the village headman for collecting revenue (thus bypassing the district administration), and began to collect rents from jagir, birta, and raja lands (Mahat et al. 1986). This had a major impact on the peasant farmers, who now not only shared the produce of their land with the government, but also with the village headman and others employed to collect the revenues, all of whom extracted their own shares.

The Rana Period: 1846-1950

The last decade leading up to the end of Gorkha rule was one of bitter struggle between competing factions, a situation that was finally resolved through the violent elimination of several leading officials and the emergence of a new dominant faction that quickly monopolized its control over key government institutions (Rose & Scholz 1980). The principle event which brought about the fall of the Shah dynasty was the Kot Massacre of 1846. The victorious faction was led by Jang Bahadur Kunwar (Rana), who eventually ruled as an absolute dictator until 1877.

Jang Bahadur Kunwar, a leading courtier, quickly moved to formally legitimize his rule through the royal sanad (order) of 1856, which transferred to the prime minister all of the absolute powers of the King. This, combined with his acceptance of the honorific title of "Rana", given to him by King Surendra in 1858, functioned not only as a means of establishing the legal basis for the authority of the Rana Prime Ministers but it also substantially raised the social and caste status of the Ranas. This had the important effect of making them eligible under traditional Hindu caste rules for intermarriage with, among others, the Shah family - a situation that would previously have been found unacceptable. Of even greater significance was the fact that this provided the Ranas with a crucial means of legitimizing and solidifying their position of power.

A major concern of Jang Bahadur Rana, as he called himself after the Kot Massacre, was in establishing systemic stability. One particular act that helped combat problems of regional governance while consolidating Rana control and ability to promote stability, was Jang Bahadur's establishment of the position of prime minister as a possession of the Rana family. Specifically, the position was handed down in terms of succession through a system that extended beyond heredity to include a consideration of seniority.[18] As a means of support, Ranas were placed in a number of high positions throughout the government.[19] This was made possible since the Rana ruler reserved the prerogative to personally confer top administrative appointments, including the post of the district governor. Not surprisingly, these senior administrative posts were almost exclusively restricted to members of the ruling family (Caplan 1975: 33). Consequently, all other senior officials in the district administration, such as those in the land revenue office, were appointed by Ranas who were at the head of the respective central departments in the capital. Although the result was a relatively strong pillar of support throughout much of the country, it has been noted that Jang Bahadur's rule was oligarchical rather than dictatorial, since his authority rested with other members of the Rana family (Rose & Scholz 1980). Nevertheless, the Rana system did serve its objective since the main political effect of Rana ascendancy was the exclusion of all other groups from competition for and exercise of power (Rose & Scholz 1980).

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[18] As the Rana family grew in size and naturally subdivided into a number of subfamily groupings, familial unity became increasingly more difficult to maintain. Especially problematic was that the number of Ranas claiming a position on the roll of succession had expanded. Part of the problem stemmed from the fact that a position on the roll had become a primary determinant of economic, as well as political, prosperity. Over the ensuing period of Rana rule, each prime minister made attempts to manipulate the roll of succession to the advantage of his particular branch of the family. The consolidator of the Rana regime, Chandra Shamsher (1901-1929), eventually institutionalized a three-way division in the Rana family by specifying the privileges and functions of each group. The particular division of the family into A, B, and C categories was initially determined by the caste status of the mother: members of the A class were born of Ranas and wives of equivalent caste status.; those of the B class were born of wives from families of good but not equivalent Kshatriya caste status, and; Ranas of the C class were born of mistresses whose caste status usually was such that it did not permit social assimilation within the Rana family. By differentiating the powers and prerogatives of the A Ranas from those of the other two groups, socially and politically, Chandra Shamsher sought to preserve the hegemony of the A class in the highest echelon while at the same time formally associating the B and C groups with lower echelons of authority in the army and the government (Joshi & Rose 1966: 48).

By the time Juddha Shamsher came to power (1932), several C Ranas had managed to advance to become the next in the line of succession. In what was to be a 'bloodless purge of the Rana family', Juddha Shamsher stripped all C Ranas of their rights of succession and banished them from the capital. Although the maneuver was justifiable, based on Nepali social values, in the long run it had disastrous effects on the Rana regime (Rose & Scholz 1980: 31). In particular, it transformed a large number of C Ranas into an imposing political opposition group. For example, two Ranas who were affected by the changes were Hiranya Shamsher and Prakash Shamsher; their sons, Suvarna Shamsher and Mahavir Shamsher, both played prominent roles in the 1950 revolution against the Rana regime (Joshi & Rose 1966: 49). For a further description of the system of succession of Prime Minister and the effect it had upon political intrigue during the Rana period, see Joshi & Rose 1966: 47-50 and Rose & Scholz 1980: 31.

[19] In many cases, the importance of the rank of one's office was dependent upon his place on the roll of succession.

The rigid interpretation of Hindu caste principles promulgated by Gorkhali rulers and their Brahman attendants was intended to exclude all other castes and ethnic groups from positions of political power (English 1985: 69). This ruling ideology both legitimized the Gorkhalis' claims to Rajput ancestry and to noble caste status, and prevented other religiously orthodox, Tibeto-Burmans included, from claiming ritual or social purity with their rulers (English 1985: 69). The Ranas managed to produce the same effect with the promulgation of the Muluki Ain (Civil Code) in 1854 - except in the Ranas' case they did so in greater detail, and with greater clarity regarding each group's position within the structure.[20]

In their governance of Nepal, the Ranas continued and expanded the efforts made by previous regimes to centralize the decision-making process and to 'modernize' the administration (Rose & Fisher 1970: 65). Hereditary land grants were no longer bestowed (except to Ranas, of course) in order to provide the center with broader controls over land distribution; the army was brought under more effective control, concentrating most units in the Kathmandu valley where they would be under the direct command of the Rana prime minister, and; "rationally based divisions" of functions among offices were introduced into the system (Rose & Scholz 1980: 29). In this latter respect, new rules and procedures (*sawals*) were formulated for each department, and a "merit system of sorts" applied through the annual review system (*pajani*) was increasingly relied upon (Rose & Scholz 1980: 29).

Efforts were also made to reorganize and modernize the judicial system. Regional courts were established with some degree of independence from the administrative institutions; the objective of which was to standardize court and legal procedures and regulations (Rose & Scholz 1980: 29). An effort was also made to rationalize and standardize the land-tenure and tax systems. As well, a written legal code, the Muluki Ain (MA), was introduced in 1854. Based on the shastric (i.e., dharmashastra) principles of orthodox Hinduism the MA codified the social behavior of the respective caste groups; that is, it incorporated a few basic Brahmanic principles, mainly those dealing with intercaste relations and caste pollution. While the caste hierarchy of the MA was a system conceived by, and for the benefit of, the higher castes, the hierarchical order of the castes presented by the MA was not agreeable to all (Höfer 1979: 40). For the ethnic groups of the remote northern regions the caste hierarchy of the MA remained a projection "'from above', a social order little known and even less accepted by the local people" (Höfer 1979: 40). The MA, however, permitted communities and ethnic groups to follow many of their own customs, so long as these local customs did not conflict with the dharmashastras (Rose & Fisher 1970: 89). Although the Muluki Ain was periodically revised during the Rana period, it was always in the direction of enhanced Hindu orthodoxy (Joshi & Rose 1966: 12).

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[20] For the most detailed examination of the Muluki Ain of 1854, see Höfer 1979.

Despite the Ranas' attempts to centralize the administration, and strengthen their control, regional and local elites managed to retain a considerable capacity to manipulate policies and developments along lines that served their vested interests (Caplan 1975: 33). Thus, although on the surface Nepal had become a relatively centralized polity under the Ranas (at least, from the Ranas point of view) effective decentralization remained widespread (Rose & Scholz 1980: 30). Nevertheless, political power, control over resources and other privileges continued to be concentrated only among a small segment of society - the political and economic elite.

Land Use and the Ranas: Maintaining the *Status Quo*

With regard to land use in general, very little change was made to previous systems. Since land was still the principal source of economic revenue for the government, the goal of Rana rule was also to control and exploit this resource to their own advantage.[21] This they accomplished by utilizing existing land-tenure systems for their benefit (Mahat et al. 1986: 227). One of the main responsibilities of the district governor was to ensure that the district's revenue potential be fully realized - in addition to maintaining peace in the district (Caplan 1975: 35). Exemplifying the extent of 'control' over land commanded by Ranas, by 1950 as much as one-third of the total cultivated land and forest areas were under *birta* tenure and of that 75 percent was assigned to members of the Rana family (Mahat et al. 1986: 227). In general, these *birta* grants were held *in absentia*; they were cultivated by tenants on a crop-sharing basis, or by means of labor tribute exacted from local populations (English 1985: 73). The assignment of *birta* land grants was also responsible for a great deal of deforestation, especially in the Terai region (D. Messerschmidt; personal communication).

It has been said that throughout most of Nepalese history, governments have been "indifferent to any proper management, conservation, or wise utilization of the forest resource" (Mahat et al. 1986: 229). Rana policies regarding rural development essentially involved extending the area under cultivation. As such, much of the focus of Rana 'forest management' was for generating tax revenue through the conversion of land from forest to agricultural use for tax revenue, or for the revenue generated from forest products (Bajracharya 1983: 232). As an incentive to foster this conversion, the 1854 legal code

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[21] Under Shah rule, all tax revenue was considered the personal income of the king, who approved and allocated all expenditures himself (Rose and Fisher 1970: 65). When the Ranas assumed control, the prime minister held the view that this revenue had thus become part of his personal income.

(Muluki Ain) prescribed tax exemptions on newly reclaimed land, while anyone who worked forest lands received in addition one-tenth of the area reclaimed as his personal *birta* (Mahat et al. 1986: 227). Otherwise, the only other value of the forest (from the view of the central government) was as a source of fuel for the metallurgical industries necessary for the manufacture of arms to support the army (Gilmour & Fisher 1991). Thus, it was during the Rana period that the forest office (*ban goswara*), the forest inspection office (office of *banjanch goswara*), and numerous check posts (*chowkis*) for forest guards were set up for the expressed purpose of arranging the sale of trees, and forest products, as well as regulating game in the forest (Mahat et al. 1986: 232).

Officially, forests came under the charge of administrative heads of the district, specifically the *bada hakims*. Their responsibility, however, was mainly limited to issuing permits for major tree-felling activities. Otherwise, there appears to have been a total absence of structure in the district administration to effectively 'manage' or administer the forests. In contrast to the functions of the administration and at the district level, at the local level the responsibility for forests remained with *talukdars*, local level functionaries, who became responsible for the protection and conservation of forests during Shah rule (Mahat et al. 1986: 229). Equally important to note, local people were themselves active in devising their own systems of forest management for meeting their needs and maintaining their local forests. In effect, 'management' per se was left up to local users, even as early as the Rana period - if not much earlier.

Growing Discontent

By 1948, it became clear that Rana Rule was quickly coming to a close. During the 1920s, numerous forces of opposition emerged, largely as a consequence of the exposure of some young Nepalis from upper- and middle-level families to an education in India and their exposure to the growing Indian nationalist movement (Joshi & Rose 1966: 493-4). By the 1930s, the first organized efforts against the Ranas from outside the clan began to emerge (though internal disputes, political intrigues, and power shifts continued to take their toll within the regime). The first came from the Praja Parishad ("People's Council"), which in 1935 began to push for a democratic government.[22] In 1940, an abortive coup in Kathmandu was staged by an underground group - reportedly led by Indian-educated Nepalese.

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[22] The Praja Parishad was essentially a political organization, and secret society, consisting of a number of Kathmandu intellectuals. As a comprehensive political party, it included members from several castes and ethnic groups in Nepal. Its primary objective was to overthrow the Rana regime and inaugurate a democratic political system. Reportedly, even King Tribhuvan was among its supporters (Joshi & Rose 1966: 54).

Stimulated by events in neighboring India (as well as independence movements in other regions of the world), the anti-Rana movement (which continued to be based primarily in India) gathered even greater strength. In 1946 the National Congress[23] opened its campaign against the Ranas. By 1948 dissident members of the Rana family formed their own anti-government group which, in 1950, merged with the National Congress to produce the Nepali Congress (Mihaly 1965: 17). At first, non-violent disobedience was used in a number of southern Nepalese towns; for example, the National Congress had staged a *satyagraha* ("passive, nonviolent resistance movement") in support of a strike in Biratnagar in 1947.

Revolution

Such movements, however, basically proved ineffectual. Although they managed to force Prime Minister Padma Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana into agreeing to institute liberal reforms, and subsequently led to the country's first constitution, it proved to be only a minor concession as the 1948 Constitution actually provided a legal framework for Rana rule (Mihaly 1965: 17; Joshi & Rose 1966: 64).[24] However, before its official proclamation, Padma Shamsher was forced to resign by a powerful group of more conservative Ranas headed by Mohan Shamsher - who eventually replaced him. Having been unsuccessful in producing any changes to the political landscape thus far, the Nepali Congress changed its tactics. In 1950 it decided to take military action against the Rana government.

Meanwhile, on 6 November 1950 (only five days prior to the first military attacks by the Nepali Congress), King Tribhuvan Bir Bikram Shah managed to gain asylum at the Indian embassy after having escaped from his guards during a hunting trip in the country. As he was being flown to New Delhi, Nepali Congress forces attacked Nepal from Indian territory at six locations. With the aid of India's Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, acting first as an intermediary and later as an arbiter, the Nepali Congress and the Ranas finally agreed to a compromise settlement in mid-January 1951 (Mihaly 1966: 17; *also see* Joshi & Rose 1966:75-80). After nearly three months of fighting, the revolution finally ended (in stalemate) with a cease-fire order on 16 January 1951.

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[23] The National Congress was founded in Calcutta by BP Koirala and several other young intellectuals who had participated in the Indian Independence struggle (Rose and Fisher 1970: 95; Mihaly 1965: 16).

[24] The 1948 Constitution did contain a number of features which would have been attractive to the general public. Included were the acceptance of the principle of representative local self-government at the village and district levels; the projected establishment of invigilatory administrative bodies such as the Auditor General's Office and Public Service Commission, and; the recognition of civil rights and liberties for the citizens of Nepal (Joshi & Rose 1966: 66). Had the constitution been passed it would have been "the first time in the history of Nepal ... that the Nepalese could exercise freedom of speech, expression,, religion, and assembly" (Joshi & Rose 1966: 66).

The Rana's Fall from Power

The Ranas eventually lost their official claim to power in 1951 when, after King Tribhuvan wrested power back on the basis of popular demand and general malaise, he revoked all powers granted by previous Shah kings to the Rana prime ministers. Initial objectives included expanding and reorganizing the administrative structure following the 1950-51 revolution. Most important of which, attempts were made to introduce a national administrative system which was to be open to all 'qualified' candidates irrespective of caste, religion, sex, and family connections, and to thereby remove the monopolization by privileged families (Joshi & Rose 1966: 167). Successfully carrying out these objectives was no simple matter.

After 1951, high-ranking ("*A*") Ranas (who had previously enjoyed a large measure of power and control within the government) played little part in ministerial politics and several branches of the family went into exile in India. However, despite initial reform programs proposed by party leaders to undercut Rana influence, the social prestige, financial resources, and information networks developed before 1950 continued to give the remaining Rana leaders (many from the lower-status 'C' Rana families) considerable influence over government activities (Rose & Scholz 1980: 49). Rana families and their clients continued to hold high positions in the bureaucracy and the army, while their traditional controls over various local elites provided a valuable resource under the newly recognized democratic norms. Also of importance was the fact that members of the Rana family had intermarried with the Shah family. Consequently any major changes initiated by Tribhuvan and later by Mahendra ultimately meant disaffecting members of his own family. This made several of the proposed changes, including those to the administrative and land tenure systems, difficult to implement.

Attempts to overhaul the political situation posed greater problems. Upon his return to Kathmandu on mid-February 1951, King Tribhuvan issued a proclamation establishing an interim government and outlining the significant features of the new political system (Joshi & Rose 1966: 83). The interim government, or "Coalition Cabinet", consisted of a coalition of both Rana and Nepali Congress representatives. Each group was allotted five representatives in the Cabinet, with Mohan Shamsher remaining as Prime Minister. His chief rival, and leader of the Nepali Congress, Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala was also a member of the Cabinet.

It was clear from the outset that conflict was inherent in this newly created political scheme.

> The Ranas, and especially the Prime Minister, were not reconciled to anything less than unquestioned authority. Similarly, the Nepali Congress was not willing

> to accept a continuation of Rana participation in the government. Throughout early 1951 the two sides battled for influence in the cabinet and, eventually, in public. (Mihaly 1965: 21)

Following a series of crises and criticism of the government by the Prime Minister himself, the Nepali Congress resigned from the cabinet on 12 November 1951, followed shortly thereafter by the Ranas. Four days later, King Tribhuvan called on the Nepali Congress to form a government; finally, ten months after the revolution had ended, the Ranas had lost.

Although the demise of the Ranas was heralded as an opportunity to finally establish a "fully democratic" political system, the earliest and most significant result of the revolution was the ensuing shift of power to the monarchy. Following the initial settlement reached in New Delhi, Nepal had three centers of power, but in practice, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress neutralized each other, thus leaving the king as the only effective power (Mihaly 1965: 22).

This the king demonstrated in his choice of Prime Minister. Rather than the charismatic B.P. Koirala, who most expected would be Nepal's first 'popular' prime minister and who was solidly backed by the Nepali Congress, the king instead chose his elder half-brother Matrika Prasad Koirala (Mihaly 1965: 23). Despite his position as President of the Nepali Congress, M.P. Koirala had little backing in his party. The king's choice created divisions in Nepalese political life which would have repercussions for more than a decade. As the personal enmity between the brothers entered the political arena the incidence of disputes between them intensified. By July 1952 the government had again collapsed, and along with it the unity of the Nepali Congress.[25]

King Tribhuvan again continued to rule through political parties (which in theory at least had popular support) (Mihaly 1965: 23). M.P. Koirala, after having formed his own party, the National Democratic Party, once again was given the position of Prime Minister. Despite a cabinet that included ministers from three other parties, M.P. Koirala remained unable to make the decisions the nation needed so desperately (Joshi & Rose 1966: 108). As the king's health deteriorated (requiring him to travel abroad to seek medical treatment), so too did the political situation. The Nepali Congress, which continued to be the strongest political party, was demanding the restoration of fundamental rights, an independent judiciary, control of inflation, general elections, and the reservation of independence (Mihaly 1965: 24). Following a non-violent civil disobedience demonstration in January 1955, which degenerated into widespread violence, and a loss of confidence in M.P. Koirala's government, Koirala offered to resign. At this point crown prince Mahendra left to confer with his father; when he returned, it was with full powers.

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[25] Mihaly (1966:23) points out that not only was the unity of the Nepali Congress shattered by the feud between the two Koirala brothers, it also had the effect of eliminating the last remaining barrier to the acquisition of all effective power by the monarchy. In this respect, the revolution had become a restoration.

King Mahendra's Changes

Following the death of King Tribhuvan in 1955, King Mahendra attempted to consolidate the central political role of the monarchy. This first meant controlling various sectors of the government apparatus (army, police, civil service). His next step was to accept the resignation of the Prime Minister, M.P. Koirala. But before King Mahendra could successfully impose partyless direct rule (which he eventually accomplished in 1960) he had to deal with the only issue the various competing parties could agree upon - the need for general elections. During the next six years of his reign six different types of cabinets were created and then summarily dismissed (the last of which was appointed through Nepal's first national election in 1959) (Rose & Scholz 1980: 41).

It was hoped that the 1959 election would usher in a whole new era. With over seventy percent of the votes, the Nepali Congress won by a commanding margin. Nevertheless, an immediate reaction was leveled against the Nepali congress. Much of the widespread unrest, which affected many parts of the country, was based on perceptions that the Nepali Congress was not acting in the best interests of the country (Bista 1991: 103). This discontent also spilled over in the direction of the government in general. In 1960, King Mahendra began to realize that the party system was not going to work and was not a viable instrument to facilitate development. He then closed down the parliament, jailed most party leaders and banned political party activities despite threats from India against such actions (Joshi & Rose 1966: 444). Then despite the formation of an advisory council, which consisted primarily of defectors from the Nepali Congress Party and was to act as a Cabinet, government control returned once again to the king. For the first time since the revolution, Nepal possessed a strong central authority. Although, at the time this was both necessary and inevitable, in the long run it proved not only a hindrance to the cause of representative government (Mihaly 1965: 56) but also had a devastating impact on Nepal's economic development.[26]

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[26] With each new government that entered office, it was common practice for high ranking officials to provide positions to individuals from within their own social and political circles. Thus, each time King Mahendra dismissed a cabinet, the civil service was likewise purged. The consequences of this practice will be further explored in chapter 5.

Lessons Learned in the 1959 Election

The 1959 national election exposed one of the most glaring weaknesses of the Nepalese political landscape. Each political party, whether the Communists on the extreme left or the *Gorkha Parishad* on the extreme right, was remarkably similar in its stated aims and purposes (Mihaly 1965: 62). Each was for land reform, social reform, equitable distribution of wealth, and with the exception of the Communist Party - which stood for a Republic - all advocated constitutional monarchy. The weakness was not so much the similarity in their objectives as much as it was that the membership of all the parties was derived almost entirely from the same group - the educated members of the landholding elements of Nepalese society (Mihaly 1965: 62). Even the position and economic standing of the urban middle class was based on landownership. While it may be true that the various political parties - which were based on such a landed group with its many vested interests in the *status quo* - advocated such sweeping reforms as a result of the power of liberal ideas entering from India, it was no surprise that any real changes were not realized. At the heart of the problem was a situation where each party was vying for support from the very group which stood to lose the most through significant reform (Mihaly 1965: 62).[27] The lack of any clear distinction between political party platforms made the prospect of representative government in Nepal (at least for time being) bleak.

Panchayat Politics

In 1962, King Mahendra introduced an innovative national political system, based on indigenous village councils (*panchayats*), that would build democracy "from the grassroots" (Mahat et al. 1986: 227). This new system of government was to eventually provide the institutional basis of Mahendra's rule. The introduction of the panchayat system meant a reorganization of the administrative system into 75 'development districts' grouped into 14 'development zones.' Commissioners were appointed to the fourteen zones and officers to the seventy-five development districts. The district governor was replaced by an Assistant Zonal Commissioner, who became responsible to a Zonal Commissioner (*Anchalades*) (Caplan 1975: 40). Within the district the assistant commissioner (and above him, the zonal commissioner) was responsible primarily for a number of political activities, including the maintenance of law and order, internal security, the land reform program, as well as the overall responsibility for the development of the zone (Caplan 1975: 40).[28] (According to Caplan, "compared to the autocratic governors of the Rana period, the heads of branches in the district today are much more constrained by a an encompassing national administration" 1975: 40.) However, the advent of zones and development districts did not immediately mean the abolition of the old district system, which for some time continued to function in only a slightly different fashion (Rose and Fisher 1970: 77).

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[27] Even the Communist Party was drawn from the middle class and considered this class's needs first (Mihaly 1965: 62).

The Panchayat system began as a four-tiered system of assemblies (*Sabhas*) and executive committees (*Panchayats*). It consists of the Village Panchayat, the District Panchayat, the Zonal Panchayat, together with their respective Assemblies or Sabhas, and the National Panchayat at the highest level. With the exception of the Village (*Gaun*) (or in a few cases, the Town, *Nagar*) Panchayat, which are directly elected by a Village Assembly (*Gaun Sabha*) consisting of the adult population in the village, all other panchayats or Assemblies in the Panchayat hierarchy were indirectly elected. District Assemblies (*Zilla Sabhas*) were made up of representatives from the Village Panchayats, one from each village in the district. This Assembly elected from among its members an 11-member District Panchayat.[29] All the members of all the District Panchayats in a particular zone constituted the Zonal Assembly (*Anchal Sabha*) whose members, together with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, formed the electoral colleges to elect members from various districts of the zone to the National Panchayat, which included 125 members in total (Shaha 1978: 66-7).

The purpose of the Panchayat system was to provide a structure based on popular support. Under the governments new orientation towards serving its citizenry, local people were to be part of the political process. With its new role in fostering development, the panchayat system was meant to empower local people to articulate their needs. In practice, however, the panchayat system had an extremely limited range of political participation (Shaha 1978: 67). Moreover, the Panchayat system did not reflect any real decentralization or deconcentration of political and administrative power (Shaha 1978: 74). In terms of the functioning at both the structural level and the level of popular involvement, the actual degree of local participatory power was negligible. One the one hand, the Village Panchayats, the Town Panchayats and the District Panchayats had been given only limited taxation and administrative powers. Their administrative functions included assisting development programs, supervising and managing the village-, the district-, or the municipality-owned or controlled property, and maintaining certain records and statistics. The Village Panchayats were granted judicial jurisdiction in minor civil and criminal cases. According to Shaha, "the claim that the new Panchayat system represents decentralization of political power and functions is completely invalid inasmuch as the central government's ultimate authority is maintained intact by granting the Panchayat Ministry discretionary power to suspend or dissolve a Panchayat and replace it with a provisional Panchayat authorized to exercise the same powers" (1978: 74). On the other hand, the general population remained excluded from the political process as the majority of the positions within the panchayat system were filled by the political and economic elites who tended to dominate under the old system.

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[28] The Zonal Commissioners also functioned as a liaison between local government bodies and the national government. This practice has since been discontinued and the Zonal Commissioners' position have been dissolved since May 1990 (Bista 1991: 105).

[29] The 1975 Amendments to the Constitution increased the number of members of the District Panchayat to 13 and those of the National Panchayat to 135.

In attempting to deal with increasing dissatisfaction with the current political and economic state of affairs, and establish a progressive image for his regime, the King also moved to introduce a number of reforms the previous regime was unable to implement. Land legislation enacted between 1951 and 1960 endeavored to reform the tenure system, rent control, and protection of tenancy rights (Joshi & Fisher 1970: 465-6).[30] By 1964, the major land-reform program was finally launched, and was aimed at the powerful local elites who had continued to support and finance illegal party activities even after the royal takeover. Birta reforms were introduced to confiscate large Rana landholdings and diminish private Rana controls over rural areas[31], while Rajya reform abolished the special authority and privileges that were granted to a number of hereditary leaders descended from ruling elites. As well, these reforms were also designed to improve the status and independence of the cultivator (Rose & Scholz 1980). The extent to which these objectives were accomplished remains the subject of debate.

The new Legal Code that was introduced in 1963, and upon which these "egalitarian" reforms were based, rejected traditional caste principles and emphasized the equality of rights for all citizens. Specifically, certain sections of the Muluki Ain were amended to remove provisions that were in essence non-egalitarian, traditional Hindu social concepts: discrimination on the basis of caste was forbidden, intercaste marriages were legalized, polygamy was prohibited, and women were guaranteed certain rights with regard to divorce and inheritance previously denied them (Joshi & Fisher 1970: 474). It has been argued that the objective of these "egalitarian" reforms was not only to disperse troublesome concentrations of power but also to appeal ideologically to the young intellectuals, both in and outside the bureaucracy, who would have otherwise supported the democratic legitimacy of the political parties (Rose & Scholz 1980). Although the provisions set out in the new code sought "to introduce equality before the law," the caste system was not entirely abolished nor did the behavior of the political elite change. As noted by Joshi and Fisher, "new appointments to administrative posts continued to be based upon political considerations, while merit or qualifications were merely incidental factors" (1970: 475). Indeed, personal relations, notably *chakari* behavior[32], continued to dominate the sphere of political behavior, while elites continued to wield political and economic power. Most importantly, the attempts to abolish the caste system did not immediately affect daily life nor did it change the parameters of power and privilege.

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[30] Policy on these issues was defined in the 1957 Land Act and the 1959 Birta Abolition Act (Joshi & Fisher 1970: 465-6). In an attempt to control (and protect) Nepal's forests, the government enacted the Forest Nationalization Act in 1957. For more about the Forest Nationalization Act, 1957, and other forest legislation, see Chapter 4.

[31] Specifically, the reforms included a clause which set ceilings on family landholdings - defined to include parents, minor sons, and unmarried daughters (Joshi & Fisher 1970: 467).

Nepal Under King Birendra's Rule

In 1972 King Birendra Bikram Shah Dev ascended to the throne following the death of his father, Mahendra. Unlike Mahendra's style of negotiation and intrigue, king Birendra emphasized political discipline, efficient administration, and economic development. He quickly began to restructure the decision-making process and bring it within a more formal, and more stable institutional framework, and he attempted to reorganize administrative and political institutions to make them more responsive to development demands (Rose & Scholz 1980: 58-60). King Birendra also introduced several reforms to improve administrative performance and reduce the ability of top administrators to alter or sabotage palace policies during implementation. For instance, better record keeping and more objective measures to evaluate a department's policy activities were instituted; promotions within the administration were to be based on merit and service records, and; greater decision-making authority was to be delegated to field offices and the chief district officers (Rose & Scholz 1980: 59).

As a result of widespread dissatisfaction with the panchayat system that had developed over the last decade (among those within the system and the public in general), King Birendra and his advisers unavoidably began a serious reevaluation of the system in 1974. This dissatisfaction, though widespread, emerged from a variety of concerns. Political party sympathizers complained of the unrepresentative character of elected panchayat officials. They questioned the democratic legitimacy of the panchayat system, and demanded the introduction of direct national elections (Rose & Scholz 1980: 60-61). In contrast, those established panchayat elites, who had been recruited primarily from traditional village elites and local notables and who were able to exact some measure of control with the current indirect method of election,[33] sought a greater devolution of authority for their panchayat institutions. Those administrators who were development-oriented criticized the conservative bias of the panchayat elites, which made plans for development increasingly more difficult to implement. - particularly where these plans threatened the *status quo*.

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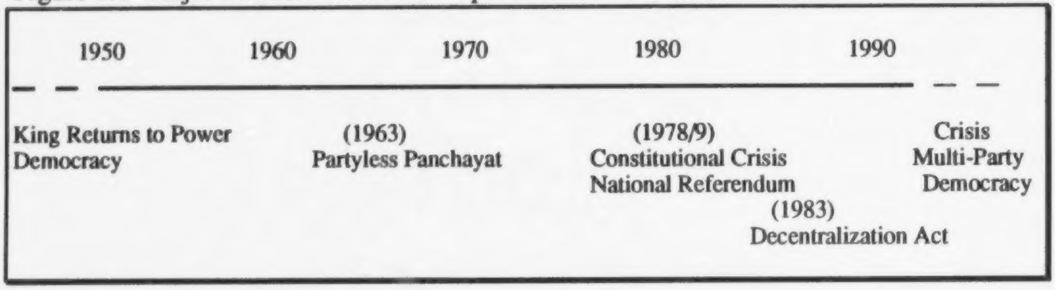
[32] *Chakari* is a particular type of socio-political relationship which is variously associated with patronage, nepotism, and favoritism. It is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Figure 1.1 Major Political Events in Nepal since the 1950s



Unable to prevent the problem of a dominant party possibly challenging the king's leadership, the constitutional amendments introduced in 1975 were designed to do nothing more than reconfirm the partyless nature of the panchayat system (Rose & Scholz 1980: 61). It was hoped, however, that the Back-to-the-Village National Campaign (BVNC) would be able to effectively remove any party sympathizers from panchayat elections and recruit new panchayat elites loyal to Birendra and supportive of his development programs (Rose & Scholz 1980: 61). These panchayat reforms were also designed to strengthen the local panchayat while dislodging some established leaders. The reforms included reorganizing and reducing the number of village panchayats from 4,000 to 3,000 units, and authorizing local panchayats to keep over half of the land taxes they collected, with the aim of enabling them to significantly increase the number of small projects they could undertake.

Nepal's Continued Pursuit of Democracy

By the late 1970s, the administrative and political reforms introduced by King Birendra had produced a highly centralized policy-making system in which expert analysis, not political compromise, was to become the dominant mode of decision-making (Rose & Scholz 1980: 63). Yet, in spite of new policies designed to encourage local political involvement in the national development effort the problem of exclusionary access to state resources had yet to be resolved. This had become an increasingly serious issue of contention, especially as it affected the manner in which politics at all levels were being played out. Combined with Birendra's numerous political changes and his interest in liberalizing his regime, which had as yet met with limited success, change was on the horizon. Or was it? Political unrest and sporadic protest movements (instigated by students) in the spring of 1979 eventually led to the king's announcement in May 1979 that a national referendum would be held. Based on adult franchise, the people of Nepal would choose between the partyless Panchayat system or a multiparty system of government. The result was that the partyless system was endorsed, primarily "as a means of avoiding institutionalized factionalism and the inter-party hostility" (Bista 1991: 104). A new constitution to facilitate the smooth working of the partyless Panchayat system was drafted shortly thereafter.

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[33] See Caplan (1975) for an example of the manner in which control of the political arena is often manipulated by village elites.

Following the referendum, considerable uneasiness prevailed, despite efforts by some Nepalese, and by donor agencies (United Nations Development Program, World Bank, and others), to liberalize the 'politics of resource control' (Messerschmidt 1994: personal communication). Eventually, the Decentralization Act of 1983 was passed in an attempt to devolve authority for local resource management activities to the *Gaun* (Village) *Panchayat*. This Act also introduced the notion of "user groups" managing local resources (i.e. forests, irrigation, etc.). Soon thereafter, the First Amendment of 1984 put power back into the hands of the District and Village politicos (most notably these *panchas* were elites who had come to command a great deal of power not only within the panchayat system but also in terms of access to resources).[34] This produced a significant decline of trust toward the Panchayat system as a political system, and towards the *panchas* as local level political elites, who by the mid- to late-1980s had acquired much of the power formerly vested in elites higher in the political system (Messerschmidt 1994: personal communication).

By the late 1980s, the political power and control these elites wielded became entrenched (and thereby further strengthened their control over resources). As this began to hinder the democratic process in the eyes of the public, the antagonism being leveled against the Panchayat system intensified dramatically (Bista 1991: 105). Under the leadership of the Nepali Congress and the United Front of the various factions of the Communist Party, discontent escalated into rebellion against the partyless Panchayat system. Following another period of civil unrest early in 1990, Birendra agreed to abandon the panchayat system, to allow political parties and to have his powers limited by a new constitution. Following the proclamation of the new constitution in September of 1990, elections were held in May 1991.

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[34] In many respects, the grip on power that the District and Village politicos held, and which was pushed through in the First Amendment of 1984, led to the overthrow of the whole Panchayat system. The original Decentralization Act lowered power to manage and control resources to the level of user groups (somewhat autonomous bodies of citizens, with their own elected leaders, management structures, rules, etc.). The *panchas* who were now formally excluded from control over resources pushed through an amendment which would force *all* user groups at the *Gaun Panchayat* level to be chaired by the elected *Pradhan Pancha* (Village Assembly Chairman).

With all the resource management power now in the hands of the local *Panchas*, combined with the inherent factionalism found in village and district politics, it was not uncommon for favoritism to occur. As an example, "should a project come along to upgrade irrigation (or forests, or water systems, or pasture management, ...) and there were two groups or locales in the village where it was sought, the *Pradhan Pancha's* own side would inevitably get it, to the detriment of the other faction or locale." Thus, while the Decentralization Act provided some decentralization from the center (in Kathmandu) down to the districts, the First Amendment put central power into the hands of the local *Panchas*, instead of to the people where it was originally intended (Messerschmidt: pers. comm.).

Conclusion

Both Buddhism and Hinduism have a long history of influence on Nepal's cultural identity. While the significance of Buddhism is now mostly confined to its influence in matters of religion amongst only a part of Nepal's population, the importance of Hinduism has been two-fold. First, and through efforts to introduce legally sanctioned social codes based on Hindu caste principles, it affected the creation of a hierarchy in society which, even though officially changed during the panchayat era, still has import upon social structure today. Furthermore, this hierarchy was used as a basis to legitimize the concentration of power and privilege among a select segment of the population, most notably Hindus of high-caste. Second, Hinduism carries with it certain ideological notions (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4) that may have a negative impact on development.

It is apparent that the preoccupation with consolidating social and political control has been a feature of the government since at least the time of Prithvi Narayan Shah's unification of the country in the 1770s. Attempts to centralize control by Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors, produced several changes over the feudal structure that predominated previously. In particular, the leading families of the court in Gorkha, the *Thar Ghar*, were removed from power and replaced by high-caste Hindu families from other principalities. Newar elite, many of whom possessed administrative and economic skills of value in the effort to centralize control, and who held a relatively high position in society, managed to monopolize key second-level positions in the central administration - a position they have held virtually unrivaled to the present. When the Ranas seized power in 1846, their efforts were dedicated to strengthening their control at all levels of the government, which they accomplished through the strategy of placing Ranas in a number of high positions. And in an effort to expand upon earlier attempts at introducing Hindu caste principles, the Ranas instituted the *Muluki Ain* in 1854 - a move that further legitimized and strengthened their position (and that of all high-caste Hindus) in society; socially, politically and economically. Even in the post 1950 period, when continual pronouncements indicated the government's plans to introduce changes in the administrative system and eliminate the concentrations of power and wealth in society, the established elites managed to remain politically and socially the most powerful members of society. As a case in point, when the panchayat system was introduced, the majority of the political and economic elites from the previous regime came to dominate the new system.

Also, despite attempts to achieve greater centralization, an unavoidable feature of the government as it evolved over the past two hundred years has been the degree of influence and control regional and local elites have acquired at the district and local levels. Throughout the Shah and Rana periods, while regional caste and ethnic elites came to exercise less of a role in court politics, they continued to be critically influential at the district and local levels. In effect, they managed to maintain the ability to manipulate policies which served their own interests. The effect of the panchayat system of government was much the same. On the one hand, the panchayat system was organized in such a way that the king and the members of the National Panchayat (many of whom the king appointed personally) remained at the center of control. Yet on the other hand, the aim of the panchayat system was decentralization, which meant that it essentially legislated the *de facto* political situation at the local level where elites maintained their concentrations of power and control. However, in practice this decentralization was stopped short of being extended to its fullest extent: it was intended to seek greater involvement of the general public in the political (and development) process. Instead, village (and district) politicos often continued to manipulate policies which served their own interests and in many cases acquired greater power than they held previously.

The value of land as a source of revenue (and as the primary means to wealth and prestige) has also played a critical role in the evolution of the administration. From as early as the Malla period, the foremost concern among rulers (whether initially within the local principality, or later at the state level) has been the collection of taxes which has been derived almost exclusively from the land. Through various types of tenure and land grants, given to tax collectors and administrative personnel in assorted capacities, local rulers and, later, the government in Kathmandu have been able to extract tax revenue (as well as corvée labor) to support its expanding administration. During Shah and Rana periods this also had the effect of encouraging the conversion of land from forest to agricultural use so as to further increase the tax base. The administration, then, evolved primarily as an extractive agency; local-level functionaries collected taxes but provided few, if any 'services' to the public. But when the panchayat system was introduced, these administrative personnel were given the responsibility to administer development related services to the public. It appears, however, that in many cases the role of the 'civil service' remained unchanged.

This chapter has surveyed Nepal's political and administrative history and how it has evolved. However, the structure of the government's political and administrative institutions encompasses only one set of issues of importance to understanding how the government's development programs are likely to function. It is also necessary to understand how the administration operates - a subject that will be dealt with in chapter four. Nevertheless, from the discussion in this chapter certain trends or patterns of continuity appear to emerge. These include the impact of hierarchical and caste principles in society and their effect in fostering the concentration of control among high-caste elites, the ability of local level elites to manipulate government policies and programs to serve their own interests, and an administration which has evolved as an extractive, rather than a service, oriented agency of the government. It is as yet too soon to determine to what degree recent political changes have impacted on these areas of continuity. The fact that these patterns have evolved over several centuries and have persisted throughout a number of political and historical periods suggests that they are not easily dissolved. If these patterns are present and do indeed affect the structure and functioning of the government and its administration, it becomes crucial to ask what impact this is likely to have on government administered development programs? How does the concentration of power and privilege - which is legitimized by a social structure based on a caste hierarchy - affect development programs dependent upon social and political change? And, what impact does the ability of local elites in manipulating government policies and programs to serve their own interest have on a program such as community forestry?

CHAPTER 2

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PEOPLES OF NEPAL

Introduction

As a small and relatively inaccessible region, Nepal and its inhabitants remained virtually unknown to foreigners until the late 18th century. Even with the arrival of officers of the East India Company some 200 years ago, attempts to overcome the 'benign ethnological neglect' (Fisher 1986: 101) characterizing much of the region have been only relatively recent. Indeed, it was not until the 1950s, when the country finally opened its borders to foreigners, that we began to amass a better understanding of the country's inhabitants - though there are still many gaps where further research is greatly needed.

Over the last four decades anthropological types of studies have grown in volume and scope. Despite the eclecticism apparent in topical and theoretical orientations throughout this period, research in ecology and development has become increasingly important, especially since the 1970s. Regardless of the anthropologist's interests, one of Nepal's major attractions for conducting research has always been the immense physical, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity which exists in this relatively small and remote country. For the anthropologist studying religion, social structure, economy, or ecology this ethnic and cultural diversity provides a rich and complex mosaic; but for the development anthropologist, this richness and complexity may also pose problems for programs which do not take them into account.

Essentially, development programs may or may not be successfully adopted by a particular community. The development literature is replete with case histories of failed development initiatives, and the reasons for these failures are many and varied. Writing in the early 1960s, applied anthropologist George Foster noted that people tended to more readily adopt changes which easily fit with their own culture. In contrast, "if 'improved' designs or recommended practices do serious violence to any of the social, cultural, or psychological needs and expectations of the people involved, they probably will be rejected" (Foster 1969: 7).[1] More recently, anthropologist and social forester Robert Fisher noted the importance of "institutional incompatibility" in social forestry development (1990). According to Fisher, a serious problem limiting the success of the Community Forestry Program in Nepal is that there exists "institutional incompatibility between the 'customs' of the forest administrators and the 'customs' of the rural people" (1990: 12). While Foster and Fisher differ somewhat in terms of why local values and customs are of importance in development efforts (Foster asserting that the cultural prescriptions implicit in programs and the values of the program itself must be consistent with local values, while Fisher's emphasis is on how the beliefs of foresters may impinge upon local values) both agree that it is critical that local values, customs, and institutions be taken into consideration for programs to be successful.

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[1] The concept Foster used to describe this process was 'syncretism'. Generally speaking, syncretism refers to the process by which people perceive and reinterpret cultural innovations in a manner which conforms to their own patterns of meaning, yet retains essentially its original function or purpose (Foster 1962: 27). Essentially, Foster's argument is that people are more likely to accept innovations - new ideas, beliefs, behaviors, or ways of doing things - that are relatively consistent with features already present in their cultural system. As an extension of this general idea, it makes sense that development programs that are compatible with features in the recipient group(s) - the intended beneficiaries of development - are more likely to succeed whereas programs that are not compatible with, or which threaten, established values and patterns of behavior are less likely to be effective.

If as Foster and Fisher assert, that one of the potential reasons for successfully adopting a new element in a community is whether the element is compatible with local institutions, then what are the chances that the changes introduced by the Community Forestry Program are compatible with local resource management practices? It is apparent then, that the more that is known about the communities affected by the program, the better the probability of assessing whether the program is appropriate for those communities.[2] Therefore, it is important to look at the information on Nepalese communities, in general, and on resource management, in particular.

This chapter will survey the available literature in terms of its historical development and with respect to the types of studies that have been conducted with two complementary purposes in mind; first, to examine what is known about the people of Nepal, and second, in order to determine the ethnographic compatibility of a development program such as Community Forestry. As a whole, this chapter includes three major sections. The first section of the chapter will cover early sources of ethnographic information about Nepal's inhabitants. This will be separated into two parts, Early Nepal and Early Ethnology; covering the sources prior to the 18th century and those following the arrival of British officers and diplomats, respectively. The second section will discuss the period since the 1950s, examining some of the research that has been conducted and how it has grown over the past four decades. The final section of the chapter will be devoted to an examination of the 'peoples' of Nepal - the main ethnic groups - according to their geographic location and the information available on them.

Early Nepal (Pre-18th Century)

A large part of the early sources of ethnographic information regarding Nepal's inhabitants comes from external sources. Though somewhat cursory, the first known references to Nepal and specifically to its early inhabitants date back at least two thousand years ago. In the Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, and in the *Rig Vega*, the oldest extant Sanskritic text, can be found mention of the Kiratas who occupied the Kathmandu Valley from as early as the 7th-2nd centuries B.C. (Regmi 1960: 16; Fisher 1985: 100). Admittedly, of the brief descriptions of the Kiratas made in the *Ramayana*, their ethnographic value is mostly inconsequential. Most of the information concerns forms of land measurement, deities worshipped, types of currency used, as well as other details of a superficial nature (Regmi 1960: 16).

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[2] As Messerschmidt (1990: 17), an anthropologist with a great deal of experience in development, has stated, "instead of uncritically importing solutions, our first responsibility [as applied anthropologists] is to understand local conditions and constraints and only then design and implement appropriate ways to help them."

Although the inhabitants of Nepal, the numerous satrapies, fiefdoms, and kingdoms who at one time ruled the Kathmandu Valley and areas surrounding the region, were literate from at least the 4th century A.D., the abundance of extant records, including royal edicts, inscriptions, chronicles, and dynastic lists, mostly provide ethnographic information of limited value. Indeed, it is not until the eleventh century that the records mention the three principal towns of the Kathmandu Valley (Regmi 1960: 9). One source of some use has been the documents known as the *vamsavalis*. These are essentially genealogical chronicles of the kings and dynasties of Nepal (Harris et al. 1973: 7). Despite the folklorish and mythical nature of the chronicles they have become a major source for the achievements, real or imaginary, of Nepal's monarchs. Their value as a historical source is greatest for the period from 600 B.C. to 450 A.D. (Regmi 1960: 55). However, even in this regard, they are most useful for providing a sequence of events and rulers rather than specific dates or duration of rule (Regmi 1960: 55-56).

Additional references to Nepal are also found in the observations of travelers, pilgrims, and traders from India and China - including those in the dynastic histories of China. Their contribution is limited mostly to information of a more historical nature. However, even in this regard their value is measured not so much by what new information they provide, but rather in terms of enabling historians such as Regmi (1960) to verify the accuracy of dates found in records such as the *vamsavalis*. An especially good example can be found in the writings of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang, who from his journeys to India in the early 7th century provides the first account of Nepal which may be verified with respect to an ascertainable date (Regmi 1960: 57). Based on his writings Regmi (1960) has observed numerous discrepancies in dates provided in the *vamsavalis*.

Additional problems with ethnographic (and historical) reconstruction for the period emerge with respect to the absence of information on areas surrounding the

Kathmandu Valley.[3] Even what may be included under the heading of 'historical evidence' pertains almost exclusively to the Kathmandu Valley to the exclusion of the rest of what now encompasses the State of Nepal. At the time, the peoples of 'Nepal' included only those who inhabited the 'Valley of Nepal', or the Kathmandu Valley as it is referred to today. It was customary for groups living outside the Valley to consider themselves not as 'coming from Nepal' but from *'pahar'*, the hills, or with reference to the river valley (*khola*), or by the name of the town or district (*jilla*) they came from. As regards the origins and character of the Valley's earliest inhabitants, again very little is known, and much of what is known is largely open to speculation. According to Regmi (1960: 16-17), there exists nothing to suggest anything about the life and society of the Kiratas or Newars prior to the 4th century. The ethnographic information for the remainder of this period is limited to a few comments about the Kiratas, who over time were to become the Newar. Briefly, they were Tibeto-Burman speakers, who may or may not have come from the Gangetic plains to the south, and for whom Buddhism had become the dominant religion (Regmi 1960: 16; 20-21).[4]

Early Ethnology

Perhaps due to the apparently inhospitable and unprofitable mountains, the seemingly impenetrable Terai forests, or even possibly the fact that the region had not been previously politically or culturally unified, Nepal managed to escape the clutches of colonization. And despite the burgeoning fascination for Nepal that would later ensue, travelers (notably European travelers) were virtually nonexistent, owing to the government's policy restricting any form of access by foreigners. Thus, unlike other locations the world over, there was little opportunity for Westerners to document or 'discover' the wonders that lay within Nepal's borders.

At the turn of the 18th century, two important events irrevocably changed Nepal's relations with its neighbors, especially as regards its isolationist position and the commencement of ethnological records by westerners. The first, which only awoke British concern for its northern neighbors and which derived from its expansionary desires, was Nepal's war with Tibet in 1792. The second, and of greater implication, was the Nepal-British war of 1814-16 that ended with the Treaty of Sagauli and which eventually resulted in Nepal's loss of Sikkim in the east, all of the hill areas beyond the

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[3] This lack of ethnographic information on the peoples living in the hills is likewise apparent in the accounts of early western writers such as Kirkpatrick (1811), Oldfield (1880), and Landon (1928).

[4] Regmi (1960) provides a useful discussion of the problems associated with information regarding the Kathmandu Valley's original inhabitants. In particular, Regmi pays heed to the controversy between whether the Kiratas or the Newars were the founding peoples.

Kali (the present boundary) in the west, and a large portion of territory in the Terai. In return Nepal received compensation and British Residents in Kathmandu, while later in the century Gurkha regiments were sent to serve in the British and Indian armies.

During the Tibeto-Nepal war of 1792 the Chinese penetrated Nepal's borders and reached within a short distance of Kathmandu. Alarmed at the fact that the Chinese had come to occupy a position "which probably afforded it a distant view of the valley of the Ganges, and of the richest of the East India Company's Possessions," the British dispatched Colonel William Kirkpatrick to aid in the negotiation of the Chinese withdrawal (Kirkpatrick 1811: v-vii). According to Kirkpatrick, no event was to be more "deprecated than the conquest of Nepaul by the Chinese" (1811: vii). Yet, the British Government refused to offer military aid, as had been requested by the Regency of Nepal, as it would have meant a direct departure from legislative policy (Kirkpatrick 1811: vii). Instead, the British offered to mediate between the two countries. However, by the time Kirkpatrick and the rest of his party arrived, Nepal and China had already reconciled their dispute. Taking advantage of the opportunity that was presented him, Kirkpatrick set about to record what he could from his travels. Though written somewhat precipitately, he managed to include notes on geography, crops grown, measures and weights, the customs and manners of the inhabitants, religion and religious festivals, and the languages spoken by the various tribes.

Following Kirkpatrick, several other British diplomats and officials resident in Nepal contributed to this early form of ethnographic literature. Included in this group are the contributions of Hamilton (1819), Oldfield (1880), Landon (1928). Generally speaking, these early accounts are best characterized as encyclopedic. With whatever opportunity these writers were provided, which tended to be few, of short duration, and geographically confined, they managed to cover as broad an array of topics as possible, though often in a manner that was neither systematic nor which included any in-depth analysis. In contrast to the above mentioned writers, one of the early, and perhaps most significant contributors was Brian Hodgson (1874). Hodgson, who was appointed to the position of British Resident of Nepal in 1833, managed to spend nearly two decades in Nepal. Similar to other writers, in that he collected information on a multitude of subjects, his work differs from his contemporaries in that his collection of articles are still worthy of review today. Other early writers of the 20th century include Adam (1936), who wrote on tribal organization and law, and Barnouw's (1935) work on marriage customs and kinship structure.

By the early 20th century, the presence of westerners in Nepal was not much greater than it had been a century before, yet Gurkha soldiers who had been recruited to fight for the British, first in the Sepoy Rebellion (1857) and then in the First and Second World Wars, had become well known. *The Gurkhas* (1928), by the British officers Northey and Morris, was one of the first attempts dedicating its attention more to the hill tribes than to the residents of the Kathmandu Valley. Although they too were not allowed to venture into the interior, and thus given little if any opportunity for actual observation, Northey and Morris were permitted to visit portions of the country on the eastern and western borders (Northey & Morris 1928: viii). There, and from their Gurkha informants, they collected information on a variety of subjects; including general history, languages spoken, religion, government and administration, and the general customs of the various ethnic and caste groups. (Northey wrote what may be considered a follow-up to his book with Morris: *The Land of the Gurkhas* (1937), perhaps more so than it's predecessor, attempts to portray the land of Nepal and its people in a scholarly fashion.) While a great deal of their discussion centers on the "Gurkhas," often attributing features from a number of distinct ethnic groups to only one, the extant information of anthropological value *The Gurkhas*, provides far exceeds its predecessors.

In retrospect, it is easy to observe several flaws and shortcomings in the works of such early writers as Kirkpatrick (1811), Hamilton (1819), or Oldfield (1880), or even those of the first half of the 20th century. A heavy reliance on description, and a lack of analysis and systematic organization, to which we are now accustomed, is readily apparent. So too is their obvious encyclopedic nature which Fisher has characterized as possessing "the random, hodge-podge quality of a potpourri" (1985: 101). Nevertheless, despite the lack of contact, direct or indirect, with the discipline of anthropology - which at the time was in its own stage of development and by no means immune to problems and controversy - and owing to the limitations under which these early writers were constrained, their contributions must be recognized for the major achievements they are.[5] For instance, Kirkpatrick's travels lasted only seven weeks, of which most was limited almost exclusively to the Kathmandu Valley (Kirkpatrick 1811: 4). Even following the Nepali-British war of 1814-1816, when the British were permitted to maintain a small resident mission in Kathmandu, travel to outlying areas was not possible. The British residents stationed in Nepal - Brian Hodgson and those who followed - were confined to the Kathmandu Valley and were not permitted to the more remote, and ethnologically interesting, hill regions. Consequently, all of the information that Hodgson, Oldfield and the others gathered was limited to second- and third-hand reports. Hodgson, for instance, went so far as to hire Nepalis to investigate ethnographic (and other science) topics.[6] Despite their inability for direct, "hands-on access to the mountains themselves," or what these writers lacked in analysis, they made up for in originality: theirs was an introduction to a region and people previously unknown to westerners.

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[5] It is often all too easy to indiscriminately criticize the research of previous anthropologists, early researchers, or travelers and thereby fail to appreciate fully the extent of their contributions and the extraordinary circumstance under which they collected their information. In the Himalayas - as of course, for many other remote areas of the world where anthropologists temporarily make their home - many of the practical difficulties involved in fieldwork were just as extreme in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s as they were for the likes of Kirkpatrick and those who followed him.

Post-1950: Anthropologists Take To The Hills

In the early 1950s Nepal's self-imposed isolation finally came to a close, and in 1953, the first professional anthropologists began work in Nepal. Among the first anthropologists from the West were a group from the School of Oriental and African Studies, which included Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Colin Rosser, Lionel Caplan, and later Alan Macfarlane, and Stephen Greenwold. (Fürer-Haimendorf 1974: 1). Fürer-Haimendorf who was perhaps one of the more prolific writers, conducted several intensive studies over a period of more than two full decades, and has written most extensively on the Sherpas (1967, 1978, 1984), Thakalis (1966b, 1975, 1981), Tamangs (1956b, 1966b) and other Bhotia groups of western Nepal, as well as the Newars (1956a) and several high Hindu castes (1959, 1960, 1966a). His interests have included caste hierarchy, inter-caste relations, and social structure (1966a; 1966b), as well as religion and economy (1975; 1984). Rosser (1966) undertook a study of the social mobility within the Newar caste system, and in 1964-65 Lionel Caplan (1970) studied the political relations between the tribal Limbus and the high Hindu castes in a district in Eastern Nepal. Later, Macfarlane's (1976) work among the Gurungs in central Nepal looked at the relationship between demographic processes and resources, while Greenwold's (1974, 1978) studies among the Newars have concentrated on the priestly caste and its position and role in Newar society.

The Japanese were also among the initial researchers in 1953 conducting anthropological investigations in Nepal. Under the direction of Jiro Kawakita (1957), a group participating in the Japanese Scientific Expedition from the Japanese Ethnological Society, undertook studies in Central Nepal among a number of high-altitude communities. Later, in 1958 Kawakita, together with R. Takayama and Shigeru Iijima, visited Dolpo in the western region near the Tibetan border and later produced the first detailed ethnographic account of the pastoral economy of that region. Kawakita later went on to conduct an ethnographic study of the Magars (1974), while Iijima's studies of the Thakalis have concentrated on the group's economic and ecological adaptation (1963, 1964) and the effects 'Hinduization' in cultural and economic change (1963).

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[6] This, combined with his scholarly background and the length of his stay in Nepal - which lasted nineteen years - are only few of the reasons for the magnitude of Hodgson's contribution to Nepal's early ethnography.

While researchers from Britain and Japan were perhaps the more well known at the time, a number of other anthropologists were also carrying out studies throughout the country. A number of Indian scholars for instance, were conducting research, mainly in the Terai on such groups as the Tharus. In addition, Victor Barnouw (1955), interviewing Gurkha soldiers, looked at marriage and kinship among the Rai and Limbu of eastern Nepal, Robert Miller (1965) studied the involvement of Darjeeling Sherpa in mountaineering and its affects on their economy, while perhaps two of the more important contributors - especially with respect to their contributions in an applied sense - were John Cool, a Community Development Advisor for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Ferdinand Okada (1957a, 1957b) whose early work examined the Newar system of trade networks based on *mit*, or ritual brotherhood, relationships. Later as a USAID anthropologist, and in the applied role of 'cultural broker' which he played for several years, Okada wrote several papers on policy and development issues (Morrison pers. comm.).

The late 1950s and early 1960s saw a blossoming of researchers from a number of countries beginning fieldwork; including France, the United States, Germany and Sweden. Among the French, the more prominent anthropologists were Bernard Pignède (1962, 1966), who completed an important ethnographic study of the Gurungs, Corneille Jest (1978) and his studies of the Thakalis, and A.W. Macdonald (1975, 1976, 1980) who conducted intensive studies among the Sherpa. Early American research, included John Hitchcock's (1961, 1963, 1965, 1966) ethnographic studies among the Magars, and was followed shortly thereafter by a number of highly prolific scholars, including Don Messerschmidt, Sherry Ortner, James Fisher, Rex and Shirley Jones, and a host of others. Andràs Höfer (1971, 1978, 1979) and Michael Oppitz (1974) from Germany and Bengt Borgström (1980) from Sweden are among the better known researchers from the ranks of their respective countries.

For the most part, research in the initial studies being conducted throughout the 1950s and early 1960s was primarily descriptive and 'exploratory'. One of the primary concerns at the time was ethnographic survey. As Fürer-Haimendorf has noted "the first task anthropologists had to undertake was to establish the nature and distribution of the main ethnic groups,... to be followed by the study of selected populations representative of the main regions and groups" (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 1). Apart from the general ethnographic research being done in order to document the respective ethnic groups, a majority of the early studies tended to concentrate on issues related to social structure. In particular, caste issues, religion, kinship, and marriage customs were especially popular topics, although some researchers were also beginning to examine economic and ecological topics, as well as the dynamics of culture change.

The Growth In Theory And Practice

While the attraction to conduct general, 'descriptive', ethnographic research has persisted, by the 1970s anthropological studies greatly expanded; in number, in the topics explored, and in the degree to which analysis and theory became an important component of the research. Consequently, one of the more apparent trends of the research of the late 1960s (and which continued on through the 1970s to the present) was a greater number of analytical types of ethnographic work. Researchers were no longer content describing the kinship patterns, religious practices, and social structure of groups but began to undertake more 'problem-oriented' research. And while the growing number of anthropologists entering the region had a natural impact on the growth in topical variation, the greater degree to which theory took precedence among some scholars tended to parallel research issues in the rest of the world. For example, the North American (and French) effort to be theoretical per se found its way into the Nepal context in the work by Marxist (Seddon, et al. 1979; Blaikie, et al. 1980) and symbolic (Ortner 1978a; Schmidt 1978; Manzardo 1978) anthropologists. It is in the areas of religion, social structure and kinship that provide perhaps the best indication of the topical, analytical and theoretical trends.

Studies in religion have ranged from descriptive accounts such as Höfer's (1971) study of Buddhist features in Tamang religion to the highly theoretical work of Ortner whose studies among the Sherpa have included an analysis of religious symbolism and caste pollution and its relationship with certain aspects of Sherpa social structure (1973), a monograph exploring Tibetan Buddhist ritualism and its relationship to Sherpa culture (1978a), and an examination of Buddhist imagery and symbolism and its role in formulating the Sherpa view of human nature (1978b). Stablein who, like Ortner, is a symbolic anthropologist, also examined religious symbolism and its relationship with notions of pollution, but conducted his study on the Tantric Buddhist tradition of the Newars (1978). Greenwold (1974, 1978), another contributor to the literature on religion in the 1970s, analyzed the dynamics of the interaction between Hinduism and Buddhism among the Newar Buddhists and found that the Buddhist clergy have been undergoing a transition which might have implications on the status of the Buddhist priest in the Newar community. As well, Hitchcock and Jones (1976) have put together an edited collection of papers on the subject of spirit possession among a number of ethnic groups, including the Limbu, Rai, Sherpas, and Gurungs.

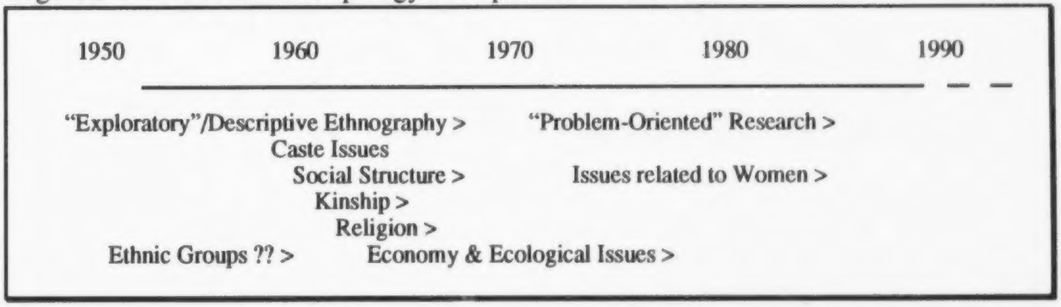
Some of the more important studies pertaining to social structure and kinship also demonstrate the variability amongst scholars and their emphasis on analysis. For example, several studies have analyzed inter-caste relations. Patricia Caplan carried out her research in western Nepal and examined the effects that the political and social changes of the 1950s and 1960s had on economic and political relations between high- and low-castes (1970), and has also analyzed institutionalized inequality and the distinctions made between caste ('hierarchy') and political and economic status ('stratification') in the same setting (1978). Toffin (1978) in a study among Newars farmers in the Kathmandu Valley analyzed economic and religious interactions among farmers and other castes to determine the extent to which caste criteria determine social intercourse. Lionel Caplan's (1974) study of the demographic and politico-economic factors associated with inter-caste marriages found that such marriages do not violate the perception of the caste hierarchy so long as they do not link groups across the pollution barrier. With respect to studies on caste-ethnic relations, Levine's (1987) research in Humla district in north-west Nepal found a system of ethnic economic interdependencies which have had profound social ramifications far beyond the simple processes of intermarriage and assimilation. And of course, there is also the landmark study by Höfer (1979) which examined on a larger scale the relations between Hindu castes and ethnic groups within the framework of the Rana government's attempts to deal with ethnic diversity through the promulgation of the *Muluki Ain* in 1854. Yet, despite the increased emphasis on theory, descriptive ethnographic studies continued to be done. Examples include Fürer-Haimendorf's (1981) observations of change in Thakali social structure and Müller-Böker's (1988) description of the Newar caste system.

Kinship studies have been equally diverse. Levine has studied kinship among the Nyinba (1981), a Tibetan-speaking people of north western Nepal, analyzing the group's theory of procreation and parent-child relationships as it explains their kinship system, provides a basis for conceptualizing relations of filiation and descent, and underlies a system of social inequality, and has written on polyandry (1988). Polyandry has been an especially popular topic for which many Tibetan speaking peoples have received a great deal of attention. As Berreman has amusingly alluded to as part of his Law of Polyandry, "the occurrence of polyandry drives all other forms of marriage from the minds of anthropological observers" (1978; quoted in Fisher 1985: 106). Others, in addition to Levine, who have written on the subject include Goldstein (1974) and Schuler (1987). Other research in the area of kinship includes Oppitz' (1974) description of Sherpa clan history, and Jones and Jones' 1976 study which provides an excellent description of marriage practices among the Limbu in northeast Nepal, focusing especially on women's roles in marriage, divorce and the family.

The Joneses' account was, in fact, one of the earliest studies (together with Andors [1976]) in Nepal that attempted to counteract the imbalance shown women and women related topics in the anthropological literature.[7] The growing body of research covering issues directly related to women, that has being accumulating since the 1970s, has included studies on women in agriculture (Schroeder and Schroeder 1979), in religion (Holmberg 1982), in politics (Molnar 1982), as well as with regard to more conventional topics such as motherhood (Bennett-Campbell 1974, 1976) and childrearing (Andors 1976). An especially important collection of research on women is the five volume, multi-part series entitled *The Status of Women in Nepal*.

With the physiographical and cultural variety found in Nepal, the opportunities available to conduct research on a variety of ecological and economic issues has been vast. These studies have ranged from specific issues such as resource depletion and population problems (Macfarlane 1976; Strickland 1984; Fricke 1986), trade (Messerschmidt and Gurung 1973; Fisher 1978, 1986; Fürer-Haimendorf 1975, 1978;), economic organization (McDougal 1968; Messerschmidt 1981), subsistence strategies (Schroeder 1985), to more general ecological issues (Iijima 1964, 1977; Jest 1978; Hoffpauir 1978; Messerschmidt 1976b, 1977; Sacherer 1977; Molnar 1981a). Many studies (particularly those which focused on environmental issues) also emerged as a response to the growing distress that had arisen out of the perception of an impending environmental 'crisis' in Nepal and the Himalayan region as a whole.[8]

Figure 2.1 Trends in Anthropology in Nepal since the 1950s


1950
1960
1970
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1990
"Exploratory"/Descriptive Ethnography >
"Problem-Oriented" Research >
Caste Issues
Social Structure >
Issues related to Women >
Kinship >
Religion >
Ethnic Groups ?? >
Economy & Ecological Issues >

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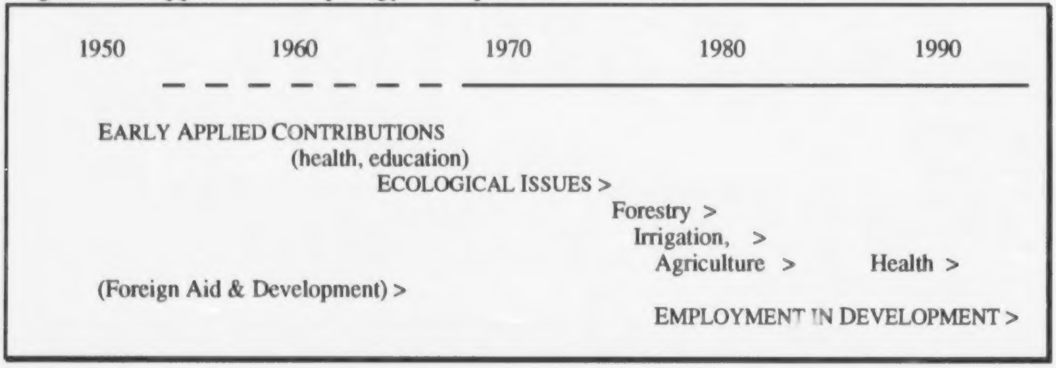
[7] For a comprehensive annotated bibliography on literature related to women in Nepal, see Shrestha (1979).

[8] Concern regarding an environmental 'crisis' in the Himalayas was prompted by articles written by Eckholm (1975a, 1975b, 1976) and Sterling (1976). Although this concern originated in the west, and was passionately pursued by western scholars, its impact in the Himalayas has had a rippling effect. Most notably for its effects on Nepal, the perception of a "crisis" of the magnitude put forth by Eckholm and Sterling resulted in a expansion of research and development in the country.

Although anthropologists have been applying their expertise since at least the late 1950s in Nepal, the available literature on applied subjects for the period prior to the 1970s is one area which does not reflect the extent of the contributions made. Part of the reason for this shortcoming stems from the fact that most of the documents and their results tend to be confined to project and government reports, thereby making both access to a valuable resource and the ability to assess this field difficult. As noted above John Cool and Ferdinand Okada were among the earlier applied contributors, while some of the more recent and more prominent include Don Messerschmidt (1987, 1989, 1990), Augusta Molnar (1981c, 1987, 1991), Lynn Bennett (1974), Judith Justice (1986) and Bob Fisher (1990, 1991). Most of the research in this regard, however, was being done only after those concerned had already conducted studies on such topics as economics, health, agriculture, resource use, or other ecological issues. As well, a majority of these contributions were primarily in the role of 'policy researcher' and/or 'cultural broker'.[9] But more recently, and despite the almost total exclusion of social scientists from working directly in development projects, a number of anthropologists (and cultural geographers) have extended their applied contribution to this context as well (Messerschmidt: pers. comm.).

Figure 2.2 Applied Anthropology in Nepal since the 1950s



Although it has traditionally been the case that many of the employment opportunities for applied anthropologists in developing countries has been in the agricultural and medical sectors, in Nepal, it was primarily in the forestry sector. The first anthropology-forestry connection in this regard came in the design phase of the

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[9] The applied roles of 'policy researcher' and 'cultural broker' refer to only two among many roles that an applied anthropologist may play in a variety of stages in the development process. They are however, two of the more common roles. Policy research essentially involves the provision of information to decision makers to aid in the formulation , implementation, and evaluation of policy, while cultural brokerage is a strategy with the primary goal of ensuring that development programs are responsive to the needs of the community (van Willigan 1993: 125-6, 157).

Resource Conservation and Utilization Project (RCUP). The Project, a multi-million dollar USAID watershed conservation project, brought together a total of 9 different government agencies (including agriculture, forestry, soil conservation, and irrigation). While pilot studies were being conducted (covering a wide range of topics, ranging from saving vast tracts of forests, water systems, pastures, erosion, irrigation) to prepare a project document, USAID hired Gabriel Campbell to look at agroforestry and forestry from a sociological perspective.[10] Campbell's work, which included studies of swidden agriculture, forestry practices, agroforestry practices, local involvement in forestry, among others, was one of the first forestry studies in Nepal that included a strong anthropological component (Messerschmidt: pers. comm.).

The real importance of Campbell's work was that it became the foundation of a number of initiatives, most notably the need to include social scientists in forestry development. Initially, in 1979-80, there were no social scientists in forestry development. When development contractors eventually did hire their first social scientist in 1981, they hired anthropologist Donald Messerschmidt. Gradually, as a greater number of opportunities have become available in Nepal, more anthropologists have been hired to work directly in development.[11] A large part of this work, however, has remained in Forestry, although some was also being done in agriculture, irrigation, and later in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the health field (Messerschmidt: pers. comm.).

Despite the increased popularity since the early 1980s of doing applied research, and the growing number of employment opportunities available, the greatest concentration has nevertheless remained in the forestry sector. But the studies have covered a wide range of perspectives. Interest in documenting indigenous forest management practices, forest use, and other areas of indigenous knowledge has been especially great. Of particular importance, has been the research related to the government's efforts to implement the Community Forestry Program. Research related to this set of issues have included project reports documenting development efforts, recommendations on the training of forestry personnel and extension efforts, government policies related to community forestry, and most notably, problems affecting the implementation of the program. Research related to the implementation of community forestry, according to Gilmour and Fisher (1991), is the one area of community forestry that requires the greatest need for further research.

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[10] On the basis of work done by Campbell and others, the RCUP was eventually designed and subsequently funded by USAID - though in the end, to put it mildly, the project failed to meet its objectives.

[11] While employment opportunities for foreign anthropologists and social scientists may have been slow to develop, many Nepalis on the other hand had long been involved in applied work. One drawback of any overview of anthropology in Nepal, whether in applied or theoretical fields, is the neglect shown Nepali scholars, many of whom have been important contributors to the discipline, though have been much neglected due to their infrequent inclusion in western read publications (Messerschmidt: pers. comm.).

An especially conspicuous example can be observed in community forestry. Although Campbell's work was very much at the forefront in terms of what foreign scholars were doing in Nepal, he was not the first to consider the social importance and linkages in forestry. E.B.J. Rana, an officer in the Forest Department, appears to be the first in Nepal to define "community forests" in a policy statement in 1952/53 - some 25 years before the FAO defined social forestry in 1978 (Gilmour and Fisher 1991: 11). An especially good source for efforts by Nepalis in forestry research can be found in Tamang (1991).

The Peoples Of Nepal

Nepal may best be described as an ethnological kaleidoscope. It is home to an ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse population, speaking a mosaic of languages. What has made this diversity most interesting, is that these groups are distributed throughout the country occupying a variety of ecological habitats; from the low plains of the Terai in the south to some of the highest and seemingly inhospitable habitats in the Himalayan ranges. With respect to development, however, the key question is; What does the ethnographic information suggest about the probable success or failure of the new Community Forestry Program? One heuristic device for discussing some of the main ethnic and cultural groups is based on their division into three essentially distinct ecological zones: the Terai, the Middle Hills and the Himalayas or High Mountains (*see* Appendices A, B and C).[12]

Terai Region

Running east to west, the Terai region of Nepal is the southernmost area of the country. Bordering upon India, the Terai region forms part of the Gangetic plain. This region is a relatively flat, low-lying plain consisting of rich alluvial soils, and is primarily subject to a tropical climate. For the most part, the Terai is inhabited by three main groups. The first consists of what are considered as the original, indigenous inhabitants. This includes such groups as the Tharus, Danwars, Satars and others. The second group consists of the more recent Hindu and Muslim immigrants who have migrated from adjacent India and have settled into the region mainly in the last century. The third group consists of the most recent arrivals, the Hindus from the mid-hills (*pahar*) of Nepal, who have taken up residence during the past generation (that is, only within about the last 25 years). Despite the apparent similarities between the indigenous tribal groups of the Terai and the culture pattern found among the tribal groups of the Middle Hills region, and the fact that Terai groups still retain many of their more traditional religious beliefs and practices, Berreman (1963) has found that the Terai groups have become influenced by Hinduism to a much greater extent than their counterparts in the hills. Moreover, it is recognized that most of the groups in this region tend to resemble more closely the Indians occupying the region immediately across the Indian border than they do the groups in the Middle Hills (Shaha 1975). Likewise, the people of the Terai speak several very different languages: in addition to the indigenous languages such as Tharu, Danuwar, Dhangar and Satar, Bengali, Maithili and Bhojpuri are spoken in the east, and Hindi and Urdu are encountered in the west (Bista 1976: 109). In addition, Nepali is also being spoken in areas where Paharis have settled more recently (Don Messerschmidt: pers. comm.).

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[12] Despite Bista's cautionary remarks that such a division is arbitrary, the organization of groups based on location in one of the three main ecological zones has proven, at least within the Nepalese context, a useful basis for ethnological comparison. Bista goes on to note that, "because of the increasing mobility of different groups of people across geographic boundaries the regional divisions indicate only the stereotypes, as indeed do many of the customs and cultural phenomena" (1976: vii).

Iijima (1963, 1964) refers to these three 'cultural areas' as the "Indic," "Himalayan," and "Tibetan" areas respectively.

The social and economic organization of the Brahmans, Rajputs, and occupational castes is similar to that of their counterparts in the hills, though the Terai Hindus tend to be as a rule more orthodox in their beliefs following Hinduism and caste rules (Bista 1976: 110). Although some areas of the Terai have become partially industrialized, agriculture remains the majority occupation (Bista 1976: 110). In general, the most common features of the Terai's inhabitants include: Hindu beliefs and practices; a caste system, which is somewhat more flexible among some of the indigenous and hill groups,[13] and; a sedentary agricultural economy based primarily on rice, although some of the indigenous groups practice shifting agriculture, some (Tharus) raise cattle, sheep and goats, and others (Danwars, Majhis, Darais) have relied to varying degrees upon a combination of farming and fishing (Bista 1976).[14]

Middle Hills Region

The Middle Hills region of Nepal has been subject to several factors influencing its cultural diversity. On the one hand, the varied climatic and geographic features have been contributing factors, while on the other hand, this region's position, geographically, historically, and politically, vis-a-vis the two 'great cultural traditions' to its north and south, Tibetan Buddhism and Indian Hinduism (and Islam), have been especially influential.

Brahmans* and *Chetris

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[13] The Tharus , for example, practice their own tribal religion which consists of worshipping a number of spirits and some Hindu deities which have been incorporated. However, among the Tharus living in the east Terai, who have been living in closer contact with high caste Hindus, it is not uncommon for them to employ Brahman priests to perform a number of Hindu religious and marriage ceremonies (Bista 1976: 123).

[14] See Schroeder (1985) for an overview of agriculture in Nepal. For a description of agriculture and tree and land tenure in the eastern Terai, see Subedi , et al 1991.

Brahmans and Chetris who form the highest ranks in the caste hierarchy are the most widely distributed group throughout the country. Their mother tongue, Nepali, is an Indo-Aryan language, and is the lingua franca in Nepal. Over half of all Brahmans and Chetris live in the hills of western and central Nepal where they form the majority of the population at the lower elevations. Throughout the remainder of the hill areas - and throughout the country - they are more evenly distributed (Fürer-Haimendorf 1966a).

Regardless of their location Brahmans and Chetris ascribe themselves to a higher social position vis-a-vis their neighbors, imposing their belief in their superior cultural and religious practices upon nearby ethnic groups (see also L. Caplan 1970; A.P. Caplan 1972). In addition to being engaged mainly in farming and government service, many Brahmins in particular, add to their income by acting as family priests. By comparison, service in the British and Indian armies is a common pursuit among the Thakuris and the Chetris. Marriages tend to be monogamous, though they do not adhere to the rules of caste endogamy. Thus it is not uncommon for a Brahman or Chetri man to marry a woman from one of the many ethnic groups (Fürer-Haimendorf 1966a; Doherty 1974a).[15] As Hindus, all Brahmans and Chetris, as well as the occupational castes, follow the religious practices and observe the religious festivals of Hinduism. As such, they worship Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna and the many other deities of the Hindu pantheon. (The general Hindu value system, which also permeates Nepalese society, in general, and has implications for development, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.)

Newars

The Newars are a highly urbanized section of the Nepali population and though most closely associated with the valley of Kathmandu, many Newars have migrated to other market areas in the kingdom wherever they have found scope for profitable trade (Bista 1976: 16). As a result, they are found in most every market town and village throughout Nepal. Apart from their skill as traders, they are also successful farmers, artisans and craftsmen (Bista 1976: 16).

The Newars are said to represent an 'intricately woven cross-section' of the population. They speak Nepali, an Indo-Aryan language, second to their mother tongue, Newari which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman stock of languages. Even though the Newars are not one single ethnic group in the sense in which the Tamangs, Magars and Gurungs are, Bista (1976: 16) argues that they constitute a definite cultural entity. Since

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[15] Fürer-Haimendorf notes that the only tolerated inter-caste marriages are hypergamous unions; for example, marriages between a Chetri man and a Gurung or Tamang woman, or the marriage of a Brahman with a Chetri woman (Fürer-Haimendorf 1966a: 6; also see Caplan 1975). See Höfer (1979) for a detailed analysis of the consequences associated with hypergamous and hypogamous marriages in Nepalese society according to the Muluki Ain of 1854.

Newari culture has, in the course of its history, been influenced by Tibet and India, there are both Buddhist and Hindu Newars in Newari society. It must be added that, although the Newar community consists of both Hindu and Buddhist sub-clans and castes, ranging from the lowest to the highest, the particular sub-divisions to which the Newars belong follow the hierarchical order based on the Hindu caste system - regardless of whether their religion is Hindu or Buddhist (Bista 1976; Shaha 1975). On the other hand, as far as religious practices and the worship of the Hindu and Buddhist deities are concerned, neither religious group can be strictly placed in one category - both parties are known to visit and worship the same deities in Hindu and Buddhist temples (Bista 1976). Moreover, almost all of the large religious festivals are observed and participated in by both groups with equal enthusiasm (Bista 1976). Also, both Greenwold (1974, 1978) and Toffin (1978) have documented the existence of cooperative organizations known as *guthi* that function as communal temple and land tenure associations (*see also* Messerschmidt 1981). While not much has been written specifically on Newar resource use, these cooperative organizations may provide a basis for the type of organizations underlying community forestry.

Owing to the complexity observed among the Newars they have been a much studied group. Beginning with Fürer-Haimendorf's (1956a; 1956b; 1960) early studies in the 1950's, further research has included; Bajracharya (1959), Nepali (1965), Rosser (1966), Allen (1975), Greenwold (1974, 1978), Stablein (1978), Schmidt (1978), Ishii (1978), Toffin (1978), Doherty (1978), Slusser (1982), and Levy (1991).

Magars

The Magars are primarily concentrated in the middle hills of central Nepal and may be divided roughly into two slightly different groups, one northern and the other southern (Hitchcock 1966; *see also* Barnouw 1955; Molnar 1981a).[16] Although all Magars observe caste restrictions and claim to be Hindus, among the southern half, the influence of Hinduism is relatively stronger than it is among the more northern Magars (Hitchcock 1966: 20-22; *see also* J. Fisher 1986; Molnar 1981b). Many Magars trade in livestock, ghee, wool, and other handicrafts (depending upon the particular village and its location relative to popular trade centers)(Molnar 1981a: 39-44), work as field laborers, or serve in the Gurkha army to obtain the extra income necessary to purchase the many other goods and services needed (*see* Hitchcock 1961; 1963).

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[16] See also Barnouw (1955), Hitchcock (1961; 1963; 1965; 1966), and Molnar (1978; 1981a;1981b). Molnar's (1981a) article examines some of the peculiar adaptations of a number of different Magar communities.

For the most part, however, Magars are subsistence farmers, practicing a form of 'mixed agriculture' - combining stock-raising with growing crops in fertilized fields (Molnar 1981a: 20). While there is variability among Magar villages as to the particular strategies employed, two general patterns are most common and have been identified as related to the general ecological context. More southerly and lower elevation villages primarily cultivate rice in their wet fields on the irrigated terraced slopes and in the river valleys, and maize, millet and wheat in dry terraced fields. Among the more northern and higher elevation villages, crop growing and harvesting is combined with a pattern of transhumance (Molnar 1981a). Nearby forests and trees are also an important resource, especially as a source of fodder for livestock, though there is very little mention of the details of forest use and management among Magars.

Gurungs

The Gurungs traditionally live along the southern slope of the Annapurna in Lamjung and Kaski districts in west-central Nepal (Messerschmidt 1974, 1976; *see also* Pignède 1962, 1966; Macfarlane 1976). Similar to some of the other Tibeto-Burman speaking tribes in the Middle Hills region, such as the Magars, Tamangs, and Thakali, the Gurungs have been influenced to varying degrees by both Indian Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism (Messerschmidt 1976). Traditionally, the Gurung religion was animistic and shamanic, similar to the pre-Buddhist Bon religion of Tibet. According to Bista, during the 1960s, Brahman and Chetri Hindu castes were beginning to dominate the Gurungs politically and culturally (Bista 1976: 75). It appears, however, that what was happening was what Srinavas (1952, 1956) has described as 'sanskritization'; the process whereby a lower caste or non-Hindu group adopts the ideology of Hinduism in an attempt to raise its economic, political and social status in the caste hierarchy of a given area. Thus, in an effort to raise their overall status, many of the wealthy Gurungs, especially those living along the fringes of the Brahman and Chetri areas, were imitating many of the Hindu precepts, such as hiring Brahman priests to perform rituals on their behalf - as well as continuing to follow more traditional Gurung practices on the side. Most recently, since the 1980s, this process has reversed itself and a type of Gurung resurgence has resulted; in essence, a new sense of Gurung identity has begun to emerge with their increased commercial success.[17]

For the most part, sedentary agriculture based on irrigated and upland rice as well as on maize, wheat, millet, and barley has become the basis of the group's farming practices (Macfarlane 1976; Messerschmidt 1976b). In some of the more northern parts, some Gurungs still pursue seasonal highland grazing with herds of sheep, goats, cattle, and water buffalo (Messerschmidt 1976b). Gurungs have also been active in long distance trade. Although initially they bartered for Tibetan salt from the north, they are now mostly involved in trade in the monetary economy with Nepalese and Indian merchants to their south (Messerschmidt and Gurung 1978; Macfarlane 1976).

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[17] Cambridge doctoral student Judy Pedigree (who has an M.A. from the University of Alberta) is currently working through Pignède's classic ethnography with a Gurung community in an effort to revise it.

An important institution in Gurung subsistence practices is *nogar*, a form of reciprocal labor exchange in agriculture (Messerschmidt 1981: 43; *see also* 1972, 1976, 1978) and also used in cutting and hauling fuelwood (Macfarlane 1976). While it is primarily a temporary village level association among Gurung youth, as a form of cooperation it "plays an important role in village and intra-ethnic unity, reciprocity, stability and communality" (Messerschmidt 1981: 44).

Rai and *Limbu*

Eastern Nepal is home to the Rai and Limbu[18], who together form the Kiranti people, one of the largest single ethnic groups in Nepal (Bista 1976: 32). The Rai and Limbu speak a number of Tibeto-Burman dialects collectively known as the Kiranti language. The Rai, the more numerous of the Kiranti people, have traditionally inhabited the *Manjh*-Kirant, or 'Middle Kirant', which refers to the valley slopes of the Dudh Kosi and Arun Rivers. The *Pallo*-Kirant, 'far-Kirant', or 'Limbuwan' is home to the Limbu.

The Rai, whose settlements are situated at altitudes of three to six thousand feet above sea level, cultivate both dry and wet fields. On dry terraces they grow maize, millet, wheat and some mustard, while in the wet fields they cultivate rice. In addition, they grow a variety of vegetables and fruit, and harvest cotton for use in clothing. Rai farmers are also known for practicing shifting cultivation, and in general rely on forests for a variety of products (McDougal 1979: 33). In addition to bullocks used for ploughing, a Rai farmer will often keep a variety of livestock, including some cattle, goats, pigs, and chickens which may be for the family's immediate needs or the cash brought through sale (McDougal 1979).

Not unlike most middle hills ethnic groups, both Rai and Limbu religion has been influenced by both Buddhism and Hinduism, though strictly speaking they are not considered either Hindu or Buddhist (Bista 1976: 41). Rather, the Rai and Limbu are known more for their traditional worship of a number of local deities. However, the

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[18] In some districts the Rai are called 'Jimidar' or 'Jimi', in other areas 'Khambu', and in some places are referred to by their *thar* clan designation (Bista 1976:32).

Limbu have adopted a variety of Hindu practices, observing the great festival of *dashain* and occasionally employing Brahman priests for various services (Bista 1976: 50).

The Limbu have traditionally occupied the area east of the Arun River extending to Nepal's eastern border. Limbu settlements are located between 2500 and 4,000 feet above sea level. Like Rais, Limbus are primarily self-sufficient from their production of rice, maize, millet, wheat and the fruits and vegetables they cultivate. However, similar to Gurungs, the Limbu do use group labor exchange cooperatives, known as *parma*, within the community for acquiring extra labor when there is a need (Caplan 1970: 108-109). Also like Rais, several Limbus have served in Gurkha regiments or have sought employment with the armed police or civil service in Kathmandu. As well, a number of Limbu men migrate in search of seasonal work to Dharan, Biratnagar, Darjeeling, Sikkim and Assam (Bista 1976: 46).

Traditionally, nearly all Rai and Limbu land was under the *kipat* system in which the people exercised inalienable communal rights over the land. Included under the *kipat* system was all cultivated lands, forests, streams, and rivers within its bounds. Rather than taxes being levied on the land, each household was subject to pay a specified amount regardless of the size of the household's landholdings. As part of an influx of Hindus, Rais and, especially, Limbus have increasingly lost access to *kipat* land (*see* Jones 1976; Caplan 1970).

Tamang

Forming one of the major Tibeto-Burman speaking communities in Nepal, the Tamang live in the high hills east, north, and west of the Kathmandu Valley generally at altitudes of between 5,000 and 7,000 ft (Bista 1976: 52-3).[19] Tamang religion is a complex mixture of Tibetan Buddhist, Hindu, and shamanic elements (Höfer 1971: 17; Fricke 1986). Like many of the other agro-pastoral groups in the Middle Hills, the Tamang are primarily subsistence oriented, though they have never been entirely self-sufficient (Bista 1976: 54; Fricke 1986). In the more northern areas, where the settlements are at higher altitudes (above 5,000 ft), the economy is based on the cultivation of wheat, barley, maize, millet, potatoes, and a few other crops (Hoffpauir 1978: 221). Transhumant livestock herding is also an integral component of the economy as large numbers of sheep, goats, cattle, and yak-cattle cross-breeds are kept (Hoffpauir 1978: 221). At the lower altitudes, below 5,000 ft, wet rice is the more dominant crop with maize and millet as important dry crops (Hoffpauir 1978: 221). Although the raising of livestock is still an important part of the Tamang economy at the lower altitudes, transhumance is not practiced here; instead, the cattle and water buffalo are kept for their milk and are used for ploughing (Hoffpauir 1978: 221). In addition, wage labor is increasing being sought outside of the village as individuals, particularly those who live on more marginal lands, are forced to earn their wages as porters, domestic servants, muleteers and grooms in Kathmandu and other towns (Fricke 1986). More recently, Tamangs have become involved in the trekking industry, often changing their names to Sherpa so as to capitalize on Sherpa success in the mountains (Morrison: pers. comm.).

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[19] See also Fürer-Haimendorf (1956a), Fricke (1986), Höfer (1971; 1978), Hoffpauir (1978), Holmberg (1989).

Thakalis

The Thakalis live in the Thak Khola area in the upper reaches of the Kali Gandaki river valley between the Annapurna Himal and Dhaulagiri Himal. The religion of the Thakalis is a mixture of Buddhism, Bonpo and Hinduism, though the adoption of Hindu practices is increasing in an attempt to dissociate themselves with 'Bhotia' people for the purpose of claiming high-caste status (Bista 1976: 91-92). The major occupations pursued by Thakalis are agriculture, pastoralism and trade (Bista 1976: 87-88; Iijima 1963). Because of Thak Khola's geographic location, the Thakali practice rainfed agriculture only in the summer growing primarily buckwheat, while their winter crops of barley, wheat, and to varying amounts, corn, are cultivated in upland fields which are dependent upon irrigation (Bista 1976: 88). Thakalis also raise yak, goats, and sheep from which they obtain meat, milk, butter, and hides, while some also breed *dzo* (a yak-cattle crossbreed), mules, horses, and donkeys which they use as pack animals in their trading operations (Iijima 1963).

The Thakalis are probably best known, however, as a trading community. Engaging in trade between Tibet, Nepal, and India, with Tukuche as their main trading center, the Thakalis have primarily imported yaks, sheep, goats, wool, butter, and salt from Tibet in exchange for Nepali and Indian foodstuffs (rice, wheat, barley,...), cotton cloth, metal utensils as well as other commodities (Iijima 1963; 1977; *see* also Messerschmidt 1972, 1982; Heide1988; Manzardo 1978; Fürer-Haimendorf 1981). As a means of raising enough capital for investment the Thakali sometimes make use of a *dhikur*, a voluntary credit association which rotates annually or biannually among the members (Messerschmidt 1981: 42).[20]

The Himalayan Region

The Himalayan region is situated along Nepal's northern border with Tibet. The many valleys and mountain slopes which span this region are inhabited by a number of relatively distinct ethnic groups who speak various Tibetan dialects and whose cultural and religious beliefs and practices are most closely associated with Tibetan-Buddhism (or *Lamaism*). These groups include: the Sherpas, Lhomis, and the Lopa (of Mustang) and Dolpo peoples of the Dhaulagiri Zone.[21] Their settlements are at relatively high altitudes, ranging from about 9,000 to 16,000 ft above sea level. Although the climate is, in general, quite cold and allowing the cultivation of only a single crop per year, it is important to recognize that a great deal of variability does indeed exist, from east to west, in terms of cultivable land and climate - particularly with regard to rainfall, which is more plentiful as one moves east.

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[20] According to Messerschmidt (1981: 42), they have also been found to enhance ethnic group solidarity. See also Manzardo (1978).

Sherpa

The traditional home of the Sherpa is the Solu-Khumbu in the Sagarmatha Zone in eastern Nepal (Fürer-Haimendorf 1964).[22] The Sherpa economy is closely related to their mountain environment, and falls into four distinct categories: field agriculture, pastoralism, trade, and more recently mountain tourism. In particular, the people of Solu have a greater degree of latitude with which to engage in agriculture so that they are much more able to grow maize, wheat and potatoes than are the people of Khumbu (Fürer-Haimendorf 1964). Consequently, in Khumbu their is a greater orientation towards pastoralism. Because of the availability of cultivable and grazing land, and the differences in elevation, Sherpas in Khumbu have developed a strategy of using a number of subsidiary settlements at higher and lower altitudes (Fürer-Haimendorf 1964, 1975; *also see* Rhoades and Thompson 1975; Brower 1991; Stevens 1993). Cattle, yaks, and yak-cattle cross-breeds are moved throughout a series of higher (*yersa*) settlements, while barley and potatoes (along with a small variety of vegetables) are grown in the lower (*gunsa*) settlements where it is possible to take advantage of the earlier thaw and the longer growing season (Fürer-Haimendorf 1964; Rhoades and Thompson 1975).

Trade, which has also been an integral part of the Sherpa economy, primarily revolved around the exchange of Tibetan salt and wool for various grains and agricultural products obtained from the Rais situated to the south (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 70). Following the Chinese invasion of Tibet, and the subsequent closure of the Tibet-Nepal border in 1959, the importance of trade has greatly diminished. Fortunately, this sudden decline in trade occurred while the Sherpas were being exposed to the growing employment opportunities being provided by an increasing interest in mountaineering and tourism. As a result, the Sherpas have garnered a widespread reputation as "high-altitude porters and sturdy mountaineers" (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 84). Employment in tourism has reportedly become so advantageous that it has surpassed both farming and trade in economic importance (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 84; *see also* Fisher 1986), although it has been suggested that the trekking industry may have a serious detrimental impact on the environment, particularly forest resources, in the Solu-Khumbu region (Bjønness 1980a, 1980b; *see also* Pawson, Stanford, and Adams 1984; Pawson et al 1984; Brower 1991b; Stevens 1993).

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[21] The Thakalis may also be included in this group, owing to their high altitude location and an ecological adaptation similar to other groups in this category.

[22] For ethnographies on the Sherpas see; Fürer-Haimendorf (1964; 1975; 1984), and Brower (1991). Additional references include; Ortner (1973; 1978a; 1978b, 1989), Oppitz (1974), Sacherer (1977; 1981), Macdonald (1980), Levine (1981), Stevens (1993).

Lhomis

The Lhomis (or *Kar Bhotes*) inhabit the upper Arun region in far-eastern Nepal. The basis of Lhomi economy is agriculture, and most villages are normally self-sufficient for food, although most of the rice consumed is bought from their southern neighbors (Bista 1976: 169). As a result of the particular climate of the Arun region, the Lhomis are able to take advantage of two agricultural seasons. In the fields near the village, millet and maize are grown during the summer monsoon season, followed by potatoes, while on the higher slopes above the villages wheat and barley are grown as winter crops (Brower 1991). Cattle are also raised, but are kept mainly for ploughing and for their meat; little value is placed on dairy products. In addition, Lhomis also trade, but only for woolen products and salt, since they are largely self-sufficient for the bulk of their food (Bista 1976: 169).

The Peoples of *Lo* and *Dolpo*

In this area of Nepal the agricultural methods are adapted to a climate that is much more arid than that of the eastern Himalayan region. In particular, Lo and Dolpo are both geographically part of the Tibetan plateau and in effect, are in the 'rain-shadow' of the main Himalayan range (Bista 1976: 176; Fisher 1986). The economies of the two regions are based on agriculture, animal husbandry and trade - although the emphasis varies from region to region, and in some cases even from village to village. In addition, there are great differences in land use between Dolpo, where most of the cultivated land lies at altitudes between 13,000 and 14,000 ft, and the considerably lower-lying land of Lo. In Dolpo only one crop a year can be grown, and this is mainly barley or wheat, though in some villages potatoes and buckwheat are cultivated in moderate quantities (Fisher 1986). The exact choice of crops depends on the locality, particularly on the type of soil and the availability of water. In many parts of Lo, however, there are winter as well as summer crops (Fisher 1986). Lopas have also traditionally traded cereal grains from the middle ranges of Nepal for salt and wool from Tibet (Bista 1976: 1798).

Animal husbandry is an important part of the farming economy of all western 'Bhotias' (Fisher 1986). In Dolpo, where extremes of altitude and climate limit the cultivation of crops, pastoral activities are especially important, much in the same way that they are among the Sherpas in Khumbu (Fisher 1986). Yak are indispensable as a source of dairy produce and meat, and as pack animals in seasonal moves. Large numbers of sheep and goats are also bred and their milk provides the people of Dolpo with a vital part of their diet (Fisher 1986). In contrast, the people of Lo are much less dependent on the breeding of livestock, though they do keep herds of sheep, yak, donkeys and mules as a means of transportation (Bista 1976: 178). Furthermore, because of their greater access to irrigated fields, agriculture provides the bulk of the food supply with herding fulfilling only a subsidiary part of the economy (Bista 1976: 178).

Forest Use

Resource use and management as a topic of research has not appeared as a recent research focus until recently, although it does appear, to a limited extent, in some early ethnographies. Information on forest use and management among Nepal's rural people has been even less well documented in the ethnographic literature. For example, McDougal (1979: 49) mentions only briefly the existence of forest use among the Rai. Even in some of the early cultural ecology studies, forest use was often neglected. In her study of the Sherpa of Rolwaling, Sacherer (1977) also mentions forest use but neglects to discuss any valuable details. Likewise, in a comparative study among the Magars, Molnar (1981a) notes the importance of forests within Magar subsistence strategies, but also fails to provide much information specific to forest use or management.

An important exception to many of the early ethnographies is Fürer-Haimendorf's 1964 monograph on the Sherpa that describes a traditional forest management system in Khumbu. Under this traditional system, forest guardians - who were chosen every year from among the various user households - were given responsibility for allocating forest resources and enforcing a number of rules and restrictions agreed upon by the community (1964: 111). In an excellent and more recent study, Stevens (1993) found that as many as seven different types of forest management systems were being used by the Sherpa, each with different purposes and different rules.

Because the Solu-Khumbu is a high impact area in terms of tourist trekking, it received concern early on with regard to the demand for fuelwood caused by the influx of trekkers - and the possible impact this increased demand had on forest degradation (*see*

Bjønness 1980a, 1980b).[23] Thus, combined with the perception of a Himalayan environmental 'crisis' (*see Chapter Three for further details*), the Solu-Khumbu was an area where concerted efforts were made to combat environmental degradation by creating, in 1976, Sagarmatha National Park (Brower 1991b: 151). Initiated by Sir Edmund Hillary and others concerned with a 'crisis' situation, and based on an *imported* (western) conservation ideology, the management techniques employed in the park placed strict rules on the local Sherpa population and essentially undermined their traditional forest (and herding) management systems (Brower 1991b; *see also* Fürer-Haimendorf 1975, 1984; Stevens 1993). In a more recent study, Stevens (1993) documents the impact of the attempts to preserve the Solu-Khumbu environment based upon traditional forest management systems.

In contrast to the dearth of information on forest use in the general ethnographic material, most of the recent, and most thorough, information on the subject has been project-based. However, much like the uneven amount of information available on Sherpa forest use relative to that available on other groups, a majority of the project-based studies have concentrated on forest use and management within what are primarily Brahman and Chetri communities and/or in communities in the Central Hills region of Nepal. For example, studies in Brahman and Chetri communities include those by Fisher (1989), Fisher and Gilmour (1991), and Mahat, et al (1986-88) in the districts of Kabhre Palanchok and Sindhu Palchok, by Messerschmidt (1987) in Myagdi and Gorkha Districts, and by Pandey and Yadama (1990) in Dhading District. Studies of forest use and management among other ethnic groups include Messerschmidt's (1987) study on the Thakali in Mustang District and Acharya's (1989) study on the Jirel in Dolakha District.

What is particularly interesting is the variability encountered in the type of management systems employed, especially in the studies done in Brahman and Chetri communities where they form the majority of the population. For example, both Pandey and Yadama (1990: 90-91) and Acharya (1989) found management systems which mainly included informal forest protection, few rules, informal village meetings, and no use of a forest guard. Messerschmidt (1987) found fairly similar management systems in three separate locations which contrast with those found by Pandey and Yadama and Acharya; two were in Brahman and Chetri communities, one in Myagdi District, another in Gorkha District, and a third in a Thakali community in Mustang District. In all three locations, forest protection was strongly emphasized, with little or no access in certain sections to allow for forest regeneration, and forest guards were used with fines given to those who violated any of the rules established by the community. Fisher (1989) found yet another management system, one which consisted of a rather complex set of use-rights differentiating access among forest users as to whether they possess 'primary rights' or 'secondary rights'. Many of the other management systems documented by Fisher and Gilmour (1991), Mahat, et al (1986-88), and Saul (1993) fit on a continuum between the systems mentioned above.

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[23] However, Pawson et al (1984b) have argued that deforestation was neither new or due to trekking. The authors point out that while much of the environmental damage is attributed to tourist-related activities - particularly fuelwood demands by trekkers - they cite a Region Tourism study by HMG done in 1977 that found that trekking demands have only increased fuel use by a mere 10 percent. The authors point that "even at the maximum tourist flow levels... 'tourism cannot have advanced the rate of deforestation by more than one year at the most'" (1984b: 242).

While some of the general ethnographic material on Nepal's ethnic groups documents organizational structures and social institutions *related to* general resource use - such as the various cooperatives found among the Newars, Gurungs, Limbu, and Thakali - there is very little in the literature specifically detailing forest use. A notable exception to this is the abundance of information available on Sherpa forest use and management. However, for the most part, this tends to reflect the amount of attention the Sherpa have received relative to many of the other ethnic groups. Where information on forest use and management has been most abundant - in project-based studies - again there has been an overwhelming discrepancy in documenting mostly Brahman and Chetri communities, although some notable exceptions exist. Unfortunately, however, there are many groups for which there is little or no information on resource use, in general, and/or forest use, in particular.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine what is known about the social institutions of Nepal's rural peoples and to determine if the program is compatible with Nepalese rural culture. It is very clear that forest products are a fundamental part of Nepalese rural life. Their appropriate use and management is also fundamental to sustainable agriculture in Nepal. From the review provided in this chapter, the literature on the peoples of Nepal indicates that there is not a comprehensive body of information that covers the whole of Nepalese rural life in all parts of the country. While some groups - primarily those in the Central hills and within community forestry project areas - have been much documented, many others have been effectively ignored. Similarly, what is known about these groups has also not been comprehensive.

In part, this is due to the fact that research in Nepal has only been done since the early 1950s. Also, academic research gradually reflected the particular regional, ethnic and theoretical interests of the researcher rather than produce a comprehensive ethnographic review of each of the groups as Fürer-Haimendorf suggested. As a result, what has emerged is a kaleidoscope of research; some groups have received a great deal of attention on a variety of subjects, others have been studied well in only a few areas, and many groups have essentially remained ignored. As well, such subjects as social structure, kinship, and religion received a large amount of interest early on, while it was only later in the 1970s that research on ecological related issues become more prominent. Although not much attention was paid to resource use and management prior to the 1970s, and was in part due to an absence of academic interest, it was also the result of the fact that resource use and management was not given high priority among development agencies until then. Thus, since research on resource management has only recently become of interest to western scholars it is not as well developed as some of the earlier research.

One thing that is very clear is that given the diversity of Nepal's cultural landscape it is probable that the management model proposed in the new Community Forestry Program will not be compatible with all groups. Only future research will adequately determine the ramifications of compatibility or incompatibility in terms of the program's success. Nevertheless, it is probable that considerable flexibility in the management strategies will be needed to account for local diversity for the program to succeed.

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN NEPAL

Introduction

Forest management per se is not new to Nepal. Evidence suggests that 'community' involvement in managing local forests dates back well into the Rana period, if not much earlier. Government involvement, however, which also dates back to the Rana period, has been based upon different objectives than those of local level users. One of the main goals of local level ('indigenous') management systems was meeting local needs for fodder, fuelwood and other forest products. In contrast, to the government during the Rana regime forests were a valuable resource to be exploited; through the sale of timber products, their use as a fuel for industry and/or the conversion of forest land for agriculture and the tax revenue that would be generated. The government's current attitude to forest management, as exemplified in its Community Forestry Program, is a significant departure from previous periods.

Chapter Two examined the potential compatibility of the Community Forestry Program with local institutions. This chapter will examine the Nepal government's approach to forest management and development within its Community Forestry Program, both contemporaneously and historically. Its purpose is to discuss the program's design, objectives and manner of implementation to discover the program's strengths and weaknesses. While 'management' of forests may not be new to Nepal, both the primacy of forests in development, as well as that of people's needs and participation in forest management, are relatively recent phenomena. The chapter begins by exploring some of the factors that led to these developments. One such factor, was the environmental movement of the 1970s; particularly a series of papers which warned of an impending environmental crisis in the Himalayas. This proved especially important in raising awareness of, and concern with, the developing world's reliance on forests. Discussion then concentrates on surveying the government's changing attitudes since the 1950s with regard to forest management and protection, and its adoption and development of its Community Forestry Program. Since part of this change in attitude has entailed a shift away from the 'traditional', 'tree-centered', 'conventional' forestry model and towards a 'people-centered' management approach, a comparison of the two is made. Also important to Nepal's context, is the potential indigenous forest management systems have in supporting community forestry initiative. Some of the results of studies in this field are reviewed. Discussion in this chapter closes with an introduction to some of the implementation problems associated with community forestry in Nepal.

Global Concerns

The 1970s was an important period of transition in Nepal; anthropologically and developmentally. During the 1950s and 1960s , Nepal - as with other developing countries - experienced little 'development' through the standard 'development from above' approach that was being advocated by theorists in development economics. It was postulated that by fostering industrialization and urbanization, dependence on agriculture would lessen, while increased jobs through industrialization would stimulate growth in national income and produce a consequent rise in per capita income. Through the 'trickle-down' effect, it was believed that economic growth would automatically bring prosperity to all segments of society. In Nepal, such a development strategy was not feasible; neither the infrastructure nor the resources necessary to transform this predominantly agricultural economy were in existence (Gilmour, et al. 1989: 96; see also Mihaly 1965; Gurung 1989). Indeed, very few resources were available to develop the agricultural sector upon which Nepal's economy continued to depend. More importantly, the gap between the rich and poor segments of society grew, while a relatively wealthy and influential middle class emerged (Gilmour, et al. 1989: 97). Similar changes were occurring throughout much of the developing world.

By the early 1970s the World Bank and other major aid agencies began to shift their policies in favor of promoting 'rural development.' Stemming from the realization that as much as 40 percent of the rural population was living below the poverty line, discussion also turned towards satisfying "basic needs," developing "appropriate technology," and fostering "people's participation" - a shift which took concrete form in the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development held by FAO in 1979 (Dag Hammerskjold Foundation 1975; Cernea 1985; Chambers 1983, 1985; Chambers and Ghildyal 1985; Chambers et al 1989; Harriss 1982). While these were not necessarily new concepts, they were taking on new meaning - or renewed meaning - in Nepal and other developing countries. The basic idea underlying rural development was to make development more appropriate to the conditions of rural people for meeting their basic needs. This unavoidably drew attention to the dependence of rural people on forests and trees - a relationship that had been much neglected in previous approaches (Gilmour and Fisher 1991; Arnold 1991).

In their review of community forestry, Gilmour and Fisher (1991) describe how development in the forestry and agricultural sectors had traditionally been separated; at best, only weak linkages were believed to exist between the two (*also see* Arnold 1991). Similar to early approaches to development that advocated a top-down, industrialization model, the traditional aim of forestry development was pro-industrialization, typified by large plantations with uniform management plans, imported rather than local technology, and a view that the forests should be protected from encroachment by local people who were held to be a major obstacle to effective (and 'scientific') management and utilization. As part of such an outlook, it was typical for forest services to focus only on trees within areas defined as forests. Tree species which had been domesticated and adopted as agricultural crops usually came only under the purview of agricultural services, so that most tree stocks maintained by rural people remained effectively ignored - if not completely unnoticed - by foresters (Arnold 1991: 1). This is not to say that forestry development neglected providing forest products to rural people, however, such forest service activities were usually pursued through a scaled down version of the conventional parameters of forestry management to the level of a village or community woodlot (Arnold 1991: 1). Consequently, tree resources were seldom maintained and managed by rural people themselves. When local people were considered in such approaches, their role was often limited to being target groups and/or consumers who would need to be enlightened as to the importance of preserving and wisely utilizing forest products. Still, it was believed that local people would benefit from having such plantations in their area, primarily through employment or the supposed spin-offs generated by the forests' contribution to industrialization and economic growth.

In many countries over the past two decades, a large number of programs have been launched to promote tree growing and forest management specifically by rural communities. Nevertheless, objectives set for these programs and the methods of implementing them have varied widely. Some programs have placed tree growing objectives within a broad and ambitious social and environmental framework (FAO 1986: 41). Others have been designed to encourage tree growing by individual farmers and private groups, with the primary objective to increase the production of wood and other tree products for household consumption or for commercial markets. Involvement by communities is often viewed as an opportunity to widen the "range and distribution of tree growing benefits by bringing public and community land into productive use and by involving landless people and the poor" (FAO 1986: 41). In addition, strengthening local institutions and generating employment have also been among the explicit objectives of many programs. While differences between many of the programs may appear considerable, their objectives are generally not mutually exclusive. Indeed, many include a combination of the above objectives.

There has, however, been a discrepancy between programs with regard to terminology. Some programs have been launched under the name of "social forestry", "forestry for local community development", or "community forestry." The distinction is an important one, as not all forestry is 'social' in the strictest sense. For instance, social forestry is not to be equated with "national forestry" or "reserve forestry" which include various protected areas such as national parks and wildlife preserves where the management, decision making and control of such forests is usually limited to park authorities, including professional foresters and forest and park rangers (Messerschmidt 1990: 5). Nor is it the same as "conventional" forestry which is typically defined by the aim in "maximizing biomass production for commercial output" (Burch 1988: 82). In such cases, local people tend to be given little if any control in how these forests are managed or used.

In general, social forestry is used to refer to any type of industrial, conservation, agro-, or communal forestry project which tries to maximize benefits for local people (FAO 1986: 42).[1] The common thread in these is that each "implies strategies to manage and use single trees, or small stands or groves, even bushes and shrubs, to the direct benefit of people in social units, be they families, clans, tribes, households, neighborhoods, or other groupings" (Messershmidt 1990: 5). "Community forestry", as was defined by FAO in 1978, fits within this schema.

> Community forestry has been defined ... as any situation which immediately involves local people in a forestry activity. It embraces a spectrum of situations ranging from woodlots in areas which are short of wood and other forest products for local needs, through the growing of trees at the farm level to provide cash crops and the processing of forest products at the household, artisan or small industry level to generate income, to the activities of forest dwelling communities. It excludes large-scale industrial forestry and any other form of forestry which contributes to community development solely through employment and wages, but it does include activities or forest industry enterprises and public forest services which encourage and assist forestry activities at the community level. The activities so encompassed are potentially compatible with all types of land ownership. While it thus provides only a partial view of the impact of forestry on rural development, it does embrace most of the ways in which forestry and the goods and services of forestry directly affect the lives of rural people. (FAO 1978: 4-5.)

But even within this definition, there exists a group of objectives. Generally, community forestry is intended to:

1) provide the means so rural families can supply, or have better access to, certain basic needs in the form of essential forest and tree products;
2) increase the participation of the rural people in managing forest and tree resources as a means of increasing their self-reliance;
3) use human resources to better manage degraded and marginal lands thereby counteracting the process of deforestation and environmental degradation;

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[1] Messerschmidt and others often use 'social' and 'community' interchangeably when speaking of what Nepal refers to as 'community forestry.'

4) contribute to the general socio-economic development of rural people through employment generation, institution building and promoting economic growth;
5) help meet the needs and aspirations of both women and men in specific underprivileged groups within the rural population, such as subsistence farmers, migrant herders and the landless;
6) increase the overall production of wood or other tree products to counter growing deficits. (FAO 1986: 42-43.)

Nepal's Community Forestry Program will be discussed later in the chapter.

Fuelwood and Deforestation: The Making of a 'Crisis'

While the development community was slowly beginning to recognize the importance of forests and forest products in meeting local needs, the rest of the world's attention was quickly drawn towards the developing world's dependence on forest products by two important events. The first was the energy 'crisis' inspired by the 1973 jump in oil prices, while the second was the growing 'environmental movement' of the early 1970s sparked by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972). As industrialized countries became acutely sensitive to the 'energy crisis', environmental concerns were further heightened by Eckholm's (1975a) "The Other Energy Crisis: Firewood" which highlighted the implications of the developing world's "daily scramble" for fuelwood. Contrary to the situation experienced in the industrialized countries, energy consumption in the rural areas of developing countries is derived almost entirely from 'non-commercial' sources, such as fuelwood, dung cakes and crop residues. The argument being fostered was that the demand for fuelwood was outstripping the supply and leading to deforestation. As a result, rural people were turning to the use of dung cakes and crop residues as fuel rather than for use as organic manures. Fuelwood demand was being perceived not only as a leading factor in the loss of tree cover,[2] but also for the declining productivity of food production systems, the deterioration in land use, and even for adversely affecting peoples diets.

Recently, more detailed studies of a wide range of situations in which the fuelwood supply situation had been identified as worsening have suggested that fuel shortages and their affect upon the productivity of agricultural systems may be much less than had been understood initially (Arnold 1991: 7). Moreover, the extent of such shortages may vary significantly from one area to another, even within a small region (Bajracharya 1983b). It is now understood that much of the wood used for fuel often comes from dead wood, or trees and shrubs outside of forest areas, so that the drain on the forest growing stock is reduced; that alternative fuels, such as crop residues and dried dung, may account for a sizable part of overall use, and that these non-forest and non-wood resources may be renewing themselves, or are being renewed, at rates able to sustain current levels of use (Arnold 1991: 7-8). Two important conclusions can be drawn from this. First, it may not be the case that decreasing availability of wood necessarily leads to shortages of fuel. Second, and perhaps more importantly for its implications on forest policy, it is not clear that planting trees specifically selected to produce fuelwood rather than a mix of products is necessarily an appropriate response where fuel shortages do exist (Arnold 1991: 7).

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[2] For a more detailed discussion and a case study of the fuelwood issue in an east Nepal Hill Region, as well as for its policy implications, see Bajracharya1983b. Messerschmidt (1994) also discusses cooking fuel from the perspective of applying the 'anthropological approach to indigenous knowledge' to community forestry development.

The link between meeting subsistence nutritional needs and the effect on environmental stability was further elaborated upon by Eckholm (1975b, 1976), Sterling (1976) and others as they attempted to raise world awareness of an impending environmental 'crisis' affecting the whole of the Himalayan region:

> There is no better place to begin an examination of deteriorating mountain environments than Nepal. In probably no other mountain country are the forces of ecological degradation building so rapidly and visibly…
>
> Population growth… is forcing farmers onto ever steeper slopes, slopes unfit for sustained farming… Meanwhile, villagers must roam farther and farther from their homes to gather fodder and firewood, thus surrounding most villages with a widening circle of denuded hillsides. Ground-holding trees are disappearing fast… Landslides that destroy lives, homes, and crops occur more and more frequently…
>
> Topsoil washing down into India and Bangladesh is now Nepal's most precious export… As fertile soil slips away, the productive capacity of the hills declines, even while the demand for food grows inexorably (Eckholm 1975: 764-5).

The apparent accelerated reduction in tree cover in the Himalayas prior to disastrous flooding in the plains of South Asia in 1977, further contributed to the notion that the demand for fuelwood was one of the main causes of deforestation and environmental instability.

Concern with the environmental crisis afflicting Nepal and the rest of the Himalayas reached its apex in what Ives and Messerli (1989) have described as the "Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation" (hereafter referred to as the *Theory*). Although the *Theory* is meant to encompass the entire Himalayan region, much of the focus (and blame) has been directed at Nepal as the area of greatest concern. Some of the basic assumptions underlying the *Theory* are as follows (Ives and Messerli 1989: 8-9):

1. A population explosion was initiated shortly after World War II due to the introduction of modern health care and medicine and the reduction of malaria and other diseases;
2. Increased population in subsistence mountain societies has led to:

    (a) reduced amount of land per family
    (b) deepening poverty
    (c) massive deforestation;

3. Mountain deforestation, on such a scale, will result in total loss of all accessible forest cover in a country such as Nepal by AD 2000, and is the cause of accelerating soil erosion and increased incidence of landsliding;
4. Destabilized mountain slopes resulting from points 1, 2, and 3 above cause:
    (a) increased flooding on the Ganges and Brahmaputra plains,
    (b) extension of the delta and formation of islands in the Bay of Bengal,
    (c) drying up of wells and springs in the hills and lower dry-season river levels downstream,
    (d) massive siltation and drastic reduction in the useful life of highly expensive water resource projects;
5. Deforestation also leads to climatic change in general and reduced rainfall amounts in particular.

Although the *Theory* remains a strong force, and has been influential in prompting donor agencies to fund large development projects, the full extent of the 'supercrisis', and particularly the assumptions upon which the *Theory* is based, have recently been challenged by a growing number of researchers. In a series of earlier papers by Thompson, Warburton, Hatley and Pitt, came the first challenges to the 'supercrisis' scenario. In 1986 the Mohonk Mountain Conference was convened to further discuss the Himalayan situation, with a diverse group of researchers, environmentalists and development personnel in attendance (Fisher 1990: 69).

In their insightful and influential (and provocative) paper "Uncertainty on a Himalayan Scale," Thompson and Warburton (1985a) draw into question the certainty of the relationship between deforestation in the hills and mountains of Nepal and flooding along the Ganges and the Brahmaputra rivers. In exploring the so-called 'facts' - as well as the myths that have been constructed while the Himalayan environment is supposedly collapsing - the authors discuss the many problems inherent in both the premises and conclusions of much of the 'scientific' research that has been carried out in the Himalayas.

Though not questioning that a problem of some sort does certainly exist, one of the central issues at the heart of Thompson and Warburton's discussion is the "technical uncertainty that is encountered in analyzing the *human components* of erosion, flooding and shifting hydrological patterns" (1985a: 118; emphasis added). As they point out, a number of uncertainties currently exist at the biophysical level:

> Uncertainty as to whether the consumption of fuelwood exceeds or is comfortably within the rate of production, uncertainty as to whether deforestation is a widespread or localized phenomenon, uncertainty as to whether it is population pressures or inappropriate institutional arrangements that lie behind instances of mismanagement of renewable resources... uncertainty as to whether deforestation

> in the hills (if it indeed exists) has any serious impact on the flooding in the plains (1985a: 131).

The most extensive examination of the *Theory* is to be found in Ives and Messerli's, *The Himalayan Dilemma* (1989). While they conclude that there are major problems to be encountered in the Himalayas, they are not of supercrisis proportions. Similar to many of the earlier papers which address the uncertainty of the situation, Ives and Messerli focus their attack on the *Theory's* underlying assumptions. They point out the following:[3]

1. There is little evidence of massive recent deforestation in the Himalayas.
2. There exists several 'myths and misunderstandings' regarding the role of forests in hydrology and soil erosion;
   (a) that contrary to popular beliefs cutting of forests usually results in the 'water-table moving *closer* to the surface, as less water is lost to evapotranspiration, and
   (b) that the tree canopy itself is of little importance in reducing sheet erosion, which is affected by ground cover and 'low vegetation'.
3. The construction of agricultural terraces often serves to stabilize land.
4. There is no evidence that deforestation in the Hills leads to any significant increased flooding on the Ganges and Brahmaputra plains.
5. Since the geophysical features of the Himalaya are intrinsically unstable, attempts to measure the impact of human intervention is impossible.

Ives and Messerli's main contention is that the 'facts' are either totally inadequate or, in some cases, actually supports the opposite conclusion. Nevertheless, they argue that there remains an urgent need to address worsening environmental and economic problems. However, they also believe that the most appropriate developmental response is one which is holistic, flexible, localized, and most importantly, one that views the local farmer as part of the solution and not simply a cause of the problem.

One of the most important consequences of the debate surrounding the *Theory*, has been its implications for development and forestry in the Himalayas in general, and Nepal in particular.. Concern with the extent of recent deforestation, and its contribution to lowland flooding, has had serious political and aid implications. Politically, there is the tension that the 'crisis' has caused between India and Nepal. Indian newspapers have repeatedly run articles blaming Nepal for the destruction and high costs of relief caused by flooding along the Ganges. With regard to financial aid, donor agencies from around the world have contributed billions of dollars in aid to fund an assortment of projects. By the mid-1970s as many as 700 groups had ties with Nepal (Sterling 1976: 14); reflecting a multitude of interests and an equally diverse set of ambitions.

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[3] See Fisher's (1990) Review Essay for a concise summary of *The Himalayan Dilemma* (1989).

One seldom asked question is why Nepal was targeted for such an extensive amount of foreign aid. While much of this aid money was for humanitarian reasons, this is only a small part of the explanation. Financial aid to Nepal also had links to political and strategic motives (*see discussion in Chapter Four*). With the potential for animosity between India and Nepal to grow, support from American aid agencies in particular, was a means to appease Indian authorities and foster better relations for the future. Aid was also strategically valuable since Nepal was an important buffer between communist China to the north and democratic India to the south. And then there is, of course, the opportunity Nepal afforded the development community as an experimental playground. As Thompson and Warburton point out, the whole international development community - the professional foresters, conservationists, agronomists, etc. - also need "serious (but curable) environmental problems" (1985a: 131).

On the Path to Protecting Nepal's Forests

The Forest Nationalization Act, 1957. Early initiatives in community forestry tended to focus on the shortage of fuelwood and its effect on deforestation as the issues of greatest importance.[4] Prompted by the decline in the condition of the nation's forests and advocated by donor agencies, the Nepal government enacted the Private Forest Nationalization Act, 1957. In eradicating the *birta* system of tenure - believed to be a hindrance to effective forest management - the Act sought to "protect, manage, and conserve the forests for the benefit of the entire country" (Bajracharya 1983: 234). Under the Act's guidelines, all forest land was to be placed under the control of the Forest Department, which would perform a policing and licensing role to ensure an adequate system of protection and maintenance of forest resources. But given the extremely limited capacity of the department's *four* professional foresters, such a mandate was highly unrealistic. The Act was also inappropriate for its failure to recognize that most forest land - as much as 50 percent of the total land cover (Gilmour, et al. 1989: 26) - was being utilized by millions of Nepalis who depended on it for their basic subsistence needs.

A common perception among many contemporary scholars is that the Private Forest Nationalization Act, 1957 led to indiscriminate cutting of forests, widespread conversion of forests to farmland and a corresponding loss of local interest in forest protection (FAO/World Bank 1979; Bajracharya 1983a; Fürer-Haimendorf 1984; Gilmour and Fisher 1991). According to this perspective, the demand for forest products was already at an alarming rate as a consequence of increasing population. The Act, then, did little to actually protect existing forests as landowners purposefully deforested their land in an attempt to prevent their holdings from being nationalized. The actual effect of the Act, remains open to debate. In those areas accessible to the Forest Department staff the Act was likely to have disrupted indigenous forest management. However, as much of the country remained beyond the reach of control and as many people were (and still remain) unaware of the legislative change it is unlikely to have caused such a drastic and immediate effect (Gilmour and Fisher 1991: 12; Acharya 1989).

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[4] Despite the widespread belief that fuelwood was linked to deforestation, the overwhelming emphasis on fuelwood alone was discomforting.

Gilmour and Fisher (1991) have observed that "contrary to the view that rural people reacted to the 1957 legislation by destroying forests is the observation that a great number of indigenous forest management systems (which were commonly set up by villagers to protect degrading forests) had their origins about 1960. (This date marked the beginning of a period of relative social and political stability, which, it could be argued, is a precondition for such indigenous communal initiatives.) Thus, rather than villagers losing control of their forests at this time, many were in fact asserting communal influence to protect forests. Because these activities were all "extra-legal" they were largely unknown by the bureaucracy" (Gilmour and Fisher 1991: 12).

Forest Act, 1961. Following the constitutional crisis of 1960, which led to Nepal's adoption of the partyless *panchayat* system of government, the next step taken in the direction of forest protection occurred with the introduction of the Forest Act, 1961. Under this new Forest Act, land was to be made available for small private forest plots, while the new village *panchayats* were to be given authorization to manage designated areas of government forests according to the directions of the Forest Department (Mahat et al 1986a; Acharya 1989: 18). Regardless of the progressiveness of these provisions, no action was actually taken in implementing them; the legal status of the forests was to remain in a hiatus for a further 15 years (Gilmour et al 1989: 27).

Forest Preservation (Special Arrangement) Act, 1967. Shortly thereafter, the Forest Preservation (Special Arrangement) Act, 1967 was introduced. Its purpose was to strengthen the 'enforcement role' of the Forest Department by defining forest offenses and prescribing penalties. To assist the Forest Department in the conservation of forest resources and in its policing functions the Forest Preservation Special Courts were created. Not only did the Forest Preservation Act prove to be of limited use, its implementation was at times somewhat selective. According to Mahat et al (1986a: 230), in actual practice "it was only the weaker section of society which was brought under the purview of this law enforcement activity and powerful individuals involved in offenses often escaped through influence and manipulation."

The Birta Abolition Act, 1959, the Land Reforms Act, 1964, and the Pastureland Nationalization Act, 1974. These Acts were designed to reinforce forest legislation with respect to government ownership over most forest land and to define limitations on individual forest and pastureland holdings (Mahat et al. 1986).

Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s the bias towards *protecting* forests was paramount. In contrast to hill forests where environmental concern was pervasive, and where inaccessibility afforded few opportunities for industrial forestry, in the Terai the bias in protection was oriented towards the commercial value of the forests. For instance, in the early 1960s, when the Forest Resources Survey was set up, its main activities included taking forest inventories and assessing the commercial exploitability of forest resources (Bajracharya 1983a: 233). Even the attention of United Nations and other expatriate forestry advisors and consultants was directed toward operating the Terai forest management for national development.[5] Despite their value for the national economy, the interrelationship between forests and people was still absent.

The Transition Begins

As concern over the overlapping problems of deforestation, environmental instability and meeting local needs mounted, initiatives designed to meet rural needs for fuelwood and other forest products took shape at both the international and national level. At the international level a series of conferences and policy statements elucidating the new social role for forestry in the promotion of community development was led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with support from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA [Gilmour, King and Hobley 1989: 29; Arnold 1991: 2]). The new focus was to become "forestry for local community development" (FAO 1978). It was also in 1978, that the World Bank issued its influential *Forestry: Sector Policy Paper* which signaled a major shift in its forestry activities away from industrial forestry towards environmental protection and meeting local needs (Arnold 1991: 2). Hence, it is apparent that this new approach to development, referred to as 'Community Forestry,' emerged, not out of the forestry sector as would be expected, but rather, it has its roots in rural development.

The first concerted effort by Nepal to assess the problems of deforestation, soil erosion, and landslides came following the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 (Bajracharya 1983a: 233). Later, in 1974, a Task Force on Land Use and Erosion Control was established within the Planning Commission. One of the first recommendations of the Task Force was to suggest separate measures for the Mountain,

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[5] See Willan (1967), Clark (1970), Earl (1973), and Browning (1974).

Hill, and Terai regions. The Mountain Region was perceived as an area where resources were under-used and intensive development efforts were needed. The Hill Region, was believed to be the area with the greatest problem. The scarcity of usable land and the simultaneous deterioration of land resources meant that a more "conservation-oriented land-use pattern" was considered appropriate, The recommendation was therefore to "concentrate on afforestation," especially on extensive unused or misused tracts where "softwood silviculture" could be practiced. In the Terai, the problem was held to be a choice between agricultural land expansion and forest area preservation. The adopted solution was to maintain forests on poorer soils and expand agriculture on better soils.

The tone set by the Task Force was followed up more specifically in the Fifth Plan, 1975-80. According to Bajracharya (1983a: 234), the key policy issues addressed in the Plan were formulated to: (1) implement the forest working plan in the entire Terai area, with appropriate modifications as necessary; (2) determine the pattern of commercial and domestic consumption of wood and adopt appropriate policies; (3) abolish the present system of auctioning, clear-felling, and marketing trees and implement plans in accord with regional development schemes; (4) plant trees for conservation and development of forest resources and also the enhancement of natural resources in general; and (5) establish a separate department so as to implement control of soil erosion on a large scale.

A conspicuous problem with the Fifth Plan was that although it was explicit about the need to control deforestation, soil erosion, and landslides, and in this respect differs significantly from the previous plans and policies, it still neither incorporated the needs, aspirations, and abilities of the people, nor recognized their problems and limitations. The forestry plans were still an expansion of the previous programs. While the Department of Soil and Water Conservation was established and mandated to act on the technical aspects of the problem, there remained no emphasis toward meeting people's minimum basic needs and directing people's participation in the development programs.

Finally, in 1975 a conference was convened in Kathmandu to discuss issues related to forest management in Nepal. Attended by Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs) from throughout the country as well as senior members of the Forest Department and Ministry, the meeting which was scheduled for only three days, lasted a full twenty-three. Out of the conference, a working group was formed with the task of formulating a plan to guide the future development of forestry in Nepal (Gilmour et al. 1989: 95). The result of all this was the National Forestry Plan, 1976; which it was hoped would also redress the neglect shown the forests in the Hills regions (NAFP 1979: 13).

The National Forestry Plan, 1976, was Nepal's first step in the direction of developing policies to address forestry development in the Hills, and which included involvement of the rural populace. Together with the desire for forests to contribute towards national development, the new forest policy touched upon a variety of issues. In recognizing the disastrous effects of the Private Forests Nationalization Act, 1957, one of its objectives was to reverse the negative attitudes and actions that it was believed nationalization had created. It identified the conservation, management, and development of forests as requiring a collective effort of all people in the country. While issues related to wildlife management, grazing, the forest industry, and the like were discussed, the government was also keenly aware of the need for improved education and training through the Nepal Forestry Institute, an improved organizational system within the Forest Department, and especially the use of local labor and the co-operation and participation of the people of Nepal. It was thus hoped that the new Forestry Plan would provide greater flexibility and allow local people more involvement in the control and management of forest resources. This was to be accomplished through a new approach to forest management: "Instead of adopting a blanket approach all over the Kingdom, a suitable forest management system will be adopted for each zone on the basis of its geographical peculiarities as well as social priority" (NAFP 1979: 16). According to Bajracharya (1983a: 234), it was the first time that a plan was to be carried out in accordance with the socio-economic realities of the nation and, through people's participation, collectively and individually, with the government providing the necessary technical and extension services.

Following the policy base established by the National Forestry Plan, the Panchayat Forest, Panchayat Protected Forest, and Leasehold Forest Legislation was passed in 1978. These rules were issued as part of the First Amendment of the Forest Act and were intended to involve communities and private interests in the management of forests. It was under this new legislation that the rules and regulations governing the handing over of government forest land - virtually all land not cultivated or otherwise under private ownership - to the control of *Gaun* (Village) *Panchayats* were specified. These areas were to be operated under an official management plan with the objective of supplying the forest produce needs of the people living in the Panchayat.

Panchayat Forests were defined as degraded forest areas - limited to a maximum 125 hectares per community - entrusted to a village panchayat for reforestation in the interest of the village community. The government (through foreign-aided projects) was to provide land, seedlings, and technical assistance, with all income from the sale of forest products going directly to the panchayat. Panchayat Protected Forests were existing forests entrusted to local panchayats for protection and proper management. They were limited to 500 hectares in each panchayat, and were similar to Panchayat Forests except that villages were to receive three-fourths of forest product income. Leasehold Forests varied from 2.5 hectares for individuals to 68 hectares for institutions. All benefits accrued through the afforestation and management of Leasehold Forests was to go to the lessee.

In contrast to previous forest policy, both the National Forestry Plan and the legislation passed in 1978 showed signs of a more progressive approach to forest management. However, based primarily on a traditional approach to forestry ('tree-centered'), and despite the acceptance that proper maintenance and development of forests in Nepal was neither possible nor even practical through government efforts alone, people-oriented forest and land-use policies had yet to materialize.[6] In fact, despite the rhetoric of people's involvement in forest management, the approach suggested by the National Forestry Plan was suspiciously similar to the development models of the 1950s and 1960s. It was understood that this legislation would formally recognize the rights of villagers to manage their own forest resources - with technical assistance (where necessary) being provided by the Forest Department (Gilmour et al. 1989: 27). Although the government recognized the necessity of incorporating local people in forest management, the persistent bias of forest policy was towards "protection, production, and proper utilization", primarily in accordance with the desire to halt environmental deterioration and ensure that forests contribute to development of the national economy (NAFP 1979: 14-16). At the heart of forestry policy was the assumption that simply increasing the physical supply of forest products would suffice. The manner in which this was to be accomplished relied on a plantation approach, where villagers were expected to restock designated areas and then reap the benefits through the sale of timber products. Within the designated areas, villagers were restricted from clearing, cultivating, or settling in the forests. In addition to a lack of support for fostering local initiatives and participation, villagers still lacked authority in making decisions regarding the management and use of their forests. Moreover, the social and political problems encountered in diverse regions in which projects were being carried out were being ignored. While it appeared as though the government was on the right path, the results were nevertheless disappointing as the area of forest actually handed over has only been a small fraction of the forest area available (*see below in the section entitled 'Implementation Problems.'*). Though there are several contributing factors responsible for this, a report by His Majesty's Government (HMG; 1991) cites a major reason for the disappointing results being the impractical nature of the Panchayat Forest and Panchayat Protected Forest Rules which failed to create an environment for the full participation of all users.

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[6] The distinction between 'tree-centered' and 'people-centered' forestry was first explicated by Gilmour et al. 1989.

While under the National Forestry Plan forests were "considered as social property" (NAFP 1979: 22), it was not until the passage of the Decentralization Act 1982 that villagers were finally legally empowered to control the management of forests. According to the act, village panchayats were empowered

> … to form people's consumers committees to use any specific forest area for the purpose of forest conservation and through it, conduct such tasks as afforestation, and forest conservation and management on a sustained basis. (Regmi 1984: 403, cited in Gilmour and Fisher 1991:14.)

By introducing the concept of 'User Groups' (then called 'consumer committees') the government sought to ensure the participation of the local population in local resource management activities (HMG 1992: 5). Responsibility for organizing the User Groups and implementing development activities was given to the local village Panchayat.[7] The main objective was to devolve the authority for most forest operations and management to the village panchayat - and even lower levels (Gilmour et al 1989: 27).

The momentum gained during the 1970s and especially the 1980s as the government moved in the direction of maximizing community control culminated in the preparation of the Forestry Legislation Reform and the Forestry Sector Policy Statement (Master Plan) 1989. The Master Plan for the Forestry Sector (MPFS) institutionalized the program approach to guide forestry development by introducing six major Forestry Sector Programs - the largest of which is the Community and Private Forestry Program (HMG 1992: 6).[8] The central focus of the Master Plan is for forest resources to be managed through the active participation of individuals and communities to meet *their* needs. Underlying this new legislation is the basic premise that the *rights to legally manage* a forest area are what is most important, regardless of ownership rights (HMG 1992: 5). It stresses people's participation in forest management, and provides the legal and organizational framework needed to increase the contributions of communities to forestry development. The basic strategy of the Master Plan is phased handing over of all accessible hill forest areas to communities to the extent that they are able and willing to manage them; formulation and implementation of simple Operational Plans, and;

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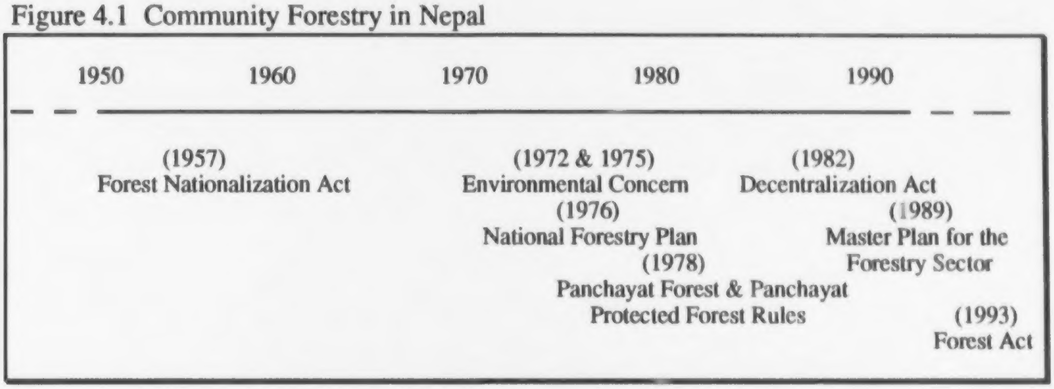
[7] The concept of Forest User Group was eventually adopted as part of the amendment to the Panchayat Forest and Panchayat Protected Forest 1988, though it still fell under the responsibility of the village panchayats (HMG 1992: 5).

[8] It is estimated that investment in community forestry would amount to 47 percent of total forestry sector investment over the next two decades (Gilmour and Fisher 1991: 15).

retraining of all Ministry of Forests and Environment (MFE) Staff for their new role as advisors and extension workers. (HMG 1992: 6.)

Figure 4.1 Community Forestry in Nepal



The government of Nepal's most recent legislation came in September of 1992 with the passing of the Forest Act (1993). Said to represent a significant change in Nepal's forestry legislation, the Forest Act incorporated many of the changes proposed in the Master Plan. In contrast to previous legislation, which gave control of almost all forest land (except for a few small areas of private forest) to the government, this new legislation was designed to transfer a major proportion of forest management and use to local forest user groups, while retaining under government management only those areas deemed to have national value for timber production or environmental protection (Pardo 1993: 23). It also repeals restrictions on cutting and transporting trees from private forests, thereby removing two of the major hurdles to increased farm and agroforestry activities (Pardo 1993: 23).

Under the new Forest Act, government-owned forests are divided into five classes for management purposes:

> Community Forests: areas of government forest whose management will be turned over to user groups as constituted under the act;
>
> Leasehold Forests: national forest areas to be leased to private institutions, communities, groups, and industries for afforestation and plantation, primarily for timber production;
>
> Government-Managed Forest: forests retained for management by the government to meet national production objectives;
>
> Protected Forests: areas of government forest managed primarily for soil, water, and environmental protection and to meet the basic needs of traditional forest users; and

> Religious Forests: Locations designated for special religious purposes, with commercial use prohibited. (Pardo 1993: 23.)

While this formula is more consistent with the expressed aims of a community forestry approach, and addresses environmental and economic issues as well, problems associated with the allocation of land and the development of management principles for the first three categories have yet to be resolved. A further shortcoming of the new legislation is its apparent failure to include more policy directives to guide both those who administer the law and those who will use the law and monitor its implementation (Pardo 1993: 23). It is also worth reiterating that even under the 1993 Forest Act *ownership* of community forest land remains with the government; user groups are only given authority to manage and control the forest resources *on* the land. Thus, what is being 'handed over' is "only a form of *resource stewardship* and, with it, certain rights of access and utilization. The actual *ownership* of the land, trees and associated resources, remains with His Majesty's Government" (Messerschmidt 1994: 36).[9]

Community Forestry in Nepal

'Community Forestry', as defined by forestry legislation and policy in Nepal, refers to the forest management strategy whereby forests are protected, managed, and utilized by the local forest users. It's main emphasis is on the involvement of local people - the actual users of the forest - in planning, implementing and decision making in all aspects of forest management; development, production, protection and use. As the Master Plan states, the goal is "to encourage communities to be increasingly more self-reliant. The challenge of community forestry is indeed to mobilize the vast manpower and other resources of rural communities for forest development and management to meet their own needs" (MPFSN 1988: 145; quoted in Burch and Messerschmidt 1990).

In order to involve local people, the government's aim is to hand over specifically designated forest areas for community control and use. Hence, forest resources are to be managed through the active participation of individuals and communities as they meet their needs. By stressing people's participation in forest management, a major part of the Community Forestry Program in Nepal has centered around the construction of the legal and organizational framework needed to increase and strengthen the contributions of local communities for sustainable forestry development.

Among the reasons for the transformation of the government's orientation, is it's realization that rural communities depend on the forests for the supply of fodder, fuelwood, and other forest products. For effective forest management to become a reality, the government realized that the Community Forestry Program needed to be more than community based, the community members themselves must be part of the management process. In effect, one of the aims in this new perspective is to decentralize forest management, to make it more of a "grass roots" system rather than a "top-down" one. Added to this was the realization that since the forests of Nepal are often fragmented into small patches, coupled with the difficulty in accessing many areas throughout the Hill region, effective management - and protection - by Forest Department staff was a virtual impossibility with the present centralized bureaucratic structure. And of course, underlying the whole Community Forestry movement in Nepal is the concern regarding the apparent, and potentially serious, deforestation taking place throughout the country - not to mention the concern regarding the potential impact deforestation has on the environment in the Himalayan region as a whole.

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[9] As Messerschmidt (1994: 36) so aptly puts it, "the operative term is *users*' group, not owners' group."

In Nepal, the process by which the local community assumes authority begins with the recognition and establishment of "Forest User Groups" at the community/local level. The Forest User Group refers to those members of the local community who make use of the forest and forest products. As emphasized by the government, it is crucial that the User Group be carefully identified to include "the poor and landless, and all who depend directly on that forest" (HMG 1991: 6). These members must then meet as a "User Group" to discuss what they want from the forest and how they will manage the forest. Following an agreement among the User Group members, an "Operational Plan" must be formulated to formalize the management and use strategies and to officially recognize the members of the User Group. Once an agreement between the User Group and the Department of Forests (DOF) is reached with respect to the Operational Plan, the (formal) responsibility for management is passed from HMG to the User Group (HMG 1992).

From Forestry to 'Community Forestry'

Community Forestry, as defined by Nepal's approach, also represents a significant shift in the forest management paradigm. In particular, this shift has been from the 'traditional forest management' system (also referred to as 'tree-centered' forestry, or the Forestry Model), in which the goal is to protect, preserve, and/or increase the physical stand of the forest, to a system in which the actual users are given control (and varying amounts of guidance) to manage "their" forests; also known as a 'people-centered' approach (Gilmour & Fisher 1991: 16). As part of the 'Forestry Model' the control and power is in the hands of professional foresters; justified by the belief that only the forestry profession has the knowledge sufficient to manage the forests effectively. In contrast, the Community Forestry approach involves putting the local people who use the forests at the center of the management effort. In other words, the objective is not so much tree (biophysical) oriented but rather is aimed at improving the situation of the poor and landless people based on the belief that this will in turn mean better use and overall protection - and sustainability - of the forests. The Community Forestry approach also reflects the recognition of local peoples' experiences in managing forests by means of indigenously devised systems.

This change in orientation has had a significant impact on the forester. By giving the local user groups full control over their own forest management, the forest officials and field staff have essentially had their previous position of power and authority revoked. And in emphasizing the importance of indigenous systems of forest management, foresters have in a similar manner have had their role as 'expert' revoked. Instead, they are now required to take on the role of consultants as well as extension agents providing guidance and support. This in turn requires drastic changes in the way foresters are trained in Nepal. Not only do they need to be proficient in good silviculture practices, they will have to be able to advise, negotiate, monitor and revise management plans under *the authority of the local user group* (Burch and Messerschmidt 1990; Metz 1991). In other words, forest staff will need to supplement their biophysical/technical forestry skills with the appropriate social science program to provide a sufficient foundation from which they will be able to work effectively *with* local peoples (Burch and Messerschmidt 1990).

It has been pointed out that the reluctance or inability of forest officials and field staff to fully transfer their authority represents a major hindrance to effective community forestry management (Gilmour & Fisher 1991; Metz 1991; HMG 1991; Baral & Lamsal 1991). A large part of this problem stems from the training and overall attitudes of forest staff which needs to be much more closely aligned with the goals and objectives of the Community Forestry program (*see* Burch and Messerschmidt 1990). Gronow (1987) found that field staff often lacked the necessary attitudes and skills required to successfully implement Community Forestry. Rangers were either unaware of Community Forestry legislation, had no training in forestry extension, were often from the Terai lowlands and hence knew little about the forests of the hills (not to mention viewed their placement in the hills and away from home as a form of punishment), and/or were unable or unwilling to accept that real responsibility for developing forest management must be handed over (Gronow 1987). According to Metz (1991), one solution is for forest staff and forest users to become *partners* in solving their common problem of creating improved and sustainable systems of forest management.

Regardless, a primary issue involves overcoming the social barriers underlying these different issues.

Indigenous Systems of Forest Management

Indigenous systems of forest management are increasingly being recognized as important not only in providing a means by which to conserve and protect the sustainability of Nepal's forest resources but also for providing local peoples with a basis for improving their overall welfare. In general, the main objective of local communities managing forests is to allow them the opportunity to obtain sufficient forest products to provide for their subsistence needs; a situation which, in fact, predates and has persisted throughout the government's involvement in forest management. The specific objectives of indigenous forest management systems do vary, however, and with them forest management practices. For example, different objectives may include the regeneration of forests, the achievement of biological goals through the selective harvest of particular species and/or products, or the fulfillment of ritual or ceremonial obligations to gain religious merit (Fisher 1989; Tamang 1990). Nevertheless, it is important to note that forest management strategies do not exist independently of the broader socio-cultural, political and economic system of the local community.

Although there is no single pattern to which all indigenous systems adhere, most indigenous systems do possess a number of features in common. The following is a review of some of the common characteristics of indigenous systems of forest management in Nepal.

Forest Protection

In general, indigenous management systems tend to provide some form of forest protection, either 1) by controlling and/or restricting access to the forests and forest products and/or 2) by transferring the pressure of demand for their products to other forests. Access to forests is commonly controlled either through the use of 'watchers' or 'forest guards', who may be paid in cash or kind, or by imposing sanctions and/or punishments, which may take the form of monetary fines, the confiscation of tools or products, or social, economic or religious sanctions (Tamang 1990; Messerschmidt 1987; Fisher 1989). In some cases forest resources are protected in one area by transferring pressure of demand for products to other forests. This is often done by dispersing the maintenance of livestock, utilizing other forests to fulfill daily demands, and/or by increasing the number of trees on private land (Tamang 1990). In addition, Fisher (1989) has noted that indigenous systems tend to be overly conservative in the product use they allow; in other words, they tend to often be *protection*-oriented, rather than *use*-oriented.

Harvesting Practices

There are a number of different strategies used to harvest forest products. These strategies include the area within which products may be harvested, the specific products that can be harvested (different products being available according to particular seasons), a period when certain products may or may not be harvested, and the amount that may be harvested (often depending on availability, the particular needs of users and social variables) (Tamang 1990).

Distribution Practices/Use-Rights

One factor affecting the distribution of forest resources is usage, or economic need. In some cases, for instance, such products as firewood may be distributed on the basis of family size so that larger families would receive more than smaller families. Tamang (1990) also found that social context, specifically caste status, may also play a role. According to Fisher (1989), although use-rights may be based on clan or lineage membership, it is more common that the main criteria governing use-rights is residential proximity to the forest in question. Even where kinship is involved it tends to operate in combination with a residence requirement (Fisher 1989). Another important factor is the presence of consensus among forest users regarding the various strategies used to manage the forest. However, it has been noted that the existence of 'consensus' does not always indicate voluntary agreement; in some cases, various forms of obligation (e.g., due to caste status, debt) may be having an impact (Tamang 1990).

Planting Practices

In general, there is a tendency for trees to be planted more often on private land than on public lands (Tamang 1990). However, it is common for access to public lands to be restricted to allow for natural regeneration of the forest. Possible reasons for this distinction include; uncertainty about public land tenure, control and use of products, and interference by the Department of Forest and Environment (Tamang 1990).

In addition to these common characteristics, Gilmour (1989) has noted a pattern between the emergence of indigenous forest management systems, the form they tend to take, and the availability and accessibility of forest resources. He has observed that in areas where the forest supply is plentiful, the forests may be treated as open access and there is little need for any system of control. Where accessibility problems are slight, there may exist some control on access rights and on the use of particular products. Finally, where availability is severely restricted, management strategies tend to focus on enforcing protection, restricting access to forest products and imposing punishments. It is also in this situation that farmers tend to plant trees on private land holdings.[10]

Some Problems with the Implementation of Community Forestry in Nepal

Although the basic plan involved in implementing the Community Forestry Program appears, in theory, relatively straightforward, in practice several problems have been identified which may reduce the overall efficacy of the program. One indicator of the severity of the problem in implementing the Program, is the amount of land that is available for the allocation of Community Forests and the actual amount that has been handed over thus far. Potential Community Forest Land available amounts to some 3.46 million ha., which is equivalent to 59% of all forested land in Nepal.[11] However, the area that has been "established as Community Forests" so far is equal to only 99,500 ha, or 2.8% of the potential land available.[12] This alone demonstrates the distance that must be covered if the goals of the Community Forestry Program are to be realized.

Two of the first steps in handing over control, namely, identifying the forest users and the area to be designated as community forest, may both run into difficulties. For one, both tasks may require a considerable amount of time and manpower (two commodities the Forest Department does not have an excess of) in order to be determined 'accurately' and 'fairly'. As an example, the government has recognized that particular care must be taken to ensure that *all* users are identified, including the poor and landless, *and* women. To accomplish this, it is necessary for DFOs not to limit themselves to accessing one or a few villages, but to make a concerted effort "to go out to the people," and must even visit other nearby areas not initially presumed to be affected. As Fisher (1989) and others have observed, membership in a group of forest users is not often consistent with politico-administrative boundaries. Often the situation is such that either the members of the user group come from a smaller segment within the established boundaries, or the group crosses boundaries - that is , its members come from more than one district.

While in some cases even getting villagers to meet may be difficult, Fisher (1989) points out that reaching agreement on management plans is much more of a problem. Especially problematic can be the task of overcoming any institutional (e.g., cultural,

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[10] Messerschmidt and others have observed that despite the loss of forest canopy in many areas throughout Nepal, the absolute number of trees may actually be increasing, owing to the tendency of many farmers individually planting trees on their private land holdings (personal communication 1993).

[11] These figures were quoted from a table in HMG 1992, which was derived from S.M. Tamrakar and DeVon Nelson, Potential Community Forest Land in Nepal, Part 2. Field Document No. 16, NEP/85/017, May 1991.

[12] Some even believe this figure to be drastically inflated. At issue is what is meant as "established as Community Forests"; whether this refers to land handed over in a legal sense, or whether it is land under actual management, is unclear.

caste) barriers that limit the participation of some members of the user group (which again often tend to be the poor and landless, and women). For example, women and poor segments of the population are often less likely to express their concerns at public meetings or to observe an agreement that denies them access to necessary resources (Metz 1991).

Although the general perception is that Forest Department staff are responsible for identifying and organizing user groups, and then assisting them in formulating an operational plan, it is also anticipated that for the Community Forestry Program to ultimately be successful local forest users must take the initiative themselves. But as Talbott and Khadka (in press) point out that this is no simple task. They note that the Forest Act, 1993, along with its by-laws, only *appears* to present a relatively straight-forward functional approach for implementing community forestry . Essentially, a community forestry user group is formed through a consensus-based process within the community, and once formal recognition by the official village political structure is established, the user group then completes and submits its Operational Plan to the District Forest Office in order to be awarded the management responsibilities for a particular community forest. However, Talbott and Khadka argue that the current implementation mechanism is clearly prejudiced against those at the base of the resource user pyramid - that is, those at the village level. For example, a prospective forest user group is obliged to fulfill certain formal legal tasks including: completing an application process, formulating an operational plan (and if necessary, amending that plan), and filing annual reports. However, "for a rural population that is predominantly illiterate and has little or no experience with administrative procedures, these requirements can be quite onerous. [Furthermore] such administrative 'hurdles' seem paradoxical to a stated policy that targets community forestry projects for the poorest and most disadvantaged segments of Nepalese society" (Talbott and Khadka: in press).[13]

With regard to the devolution of authority to the User Group, there is likewise the potential for problems to arise. For instance, Gilmour and Fisher (1991) have noted that even in areas where operational plans have been written and approved, the DFOs show great reluctance to release *effective* control to the User Groups. Either there is a reluctance to relinquish any authority whatsoever, or the DFOs tend to want to hand over

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[13] The authors point out that the "handing over" mandate is further compromised by the fact that the government authorities retain considerable, if not overriding, jurisdiction and discretion over the entire process. For example, an inherent problem of the application process stems from the DFO's power to delay or deny the submission of an Operational Plan, thus preventing a user group from legally functioning. And while the DFOs are charged with assisting the user community meet these procedural requirements, they are also charged with regulating and enforcing the law. This establishes the potential for conflicts of interest, especially in terms of encouraging the potential for corruption by the DFO in exercising his enforcement powers (Talbott and Khadka: in press).

responsibility for management yet keep important elements of *authority* for themselves (Gilmour & Fisher 1991). Finally, in discussing and formulating the forest management objectives of the User Group, which are to form the basis of the Group's Operational Plan, it is necessary to ensure that the management plans are kept uncomplicated and are in fact, based on the Group's objectives, not those of the DFO. It has not been uncommon in the past for such plans to be written with little or no consultation with the forest users (Metz 1991). Thus, at the village level, the Community Forestry Program will be limited to the extent that the DFOs assume their new role as extension agents and consultants.

There are also a series of logistical constraints, or as the Forest Department recognizes them, 'bottlenecks to implementation', that have slowed the rate of hand-over of forests to user-groups. One of the more important demands of the Community Forestry Program is that authority be decentralized and given to local user groups. Hence, for Community Forestry to function, DOF institutions must be altered in such a way that authority is *de*centralized (Metz 1991). However, at present, planning and budgeting procedures are too centralized and too rigid (HMG 1991). Instead, the Forest Department feels that there needs to be greater delegation to the Districts so that locally feasible planning can replace centrally dictated targets. These regulations also need to be freed from controls and restrictions that currently hinder the smooth operation of the Community Forestry Program's development activities. In a similar manner, the roles and responsibilities of the different strata within the Department of Forests are extremely unclear (HMG 1991). As a result, management activities become improvised, responding only to crises rather than acting to avoid problems.

Additional problems at the district level include: too frequent staff transfers at District Offices; the staff assigned to a particular district may be forced to live with groups that, for various reasons (e.g. cultural, religious, personal), makes them personally difficult to work with, not to mention the attitude felt by many staff of being "punished" by being sent to distant rural areas; staff shortages, particularly of *trained* field staff, and; there may exist a low sense of accountability among field staff, in that true decentralization and democratization of decision-making is needed for the field staff to answer to local people.

Delays in handing over designated areas to local user groups as a result of unnecessary expectations of what constitutes an appropriate operational plan may also exist. Rather than creating unnecessary barriers that may only serve to disrupt already operating indigenous management systems, the general perception is that it would seem to be much more beneficial to simply accept the operational plans of such indigenously designed systems, proceed to develop some organizational linkages and good relations between the DOF and the local user groups, and then begin to work with them through consultation and extension to produce what would surely be a much more ‘efficient’ and sustainable forest management system. Nevertheless, the Community Forestry Program will be limited by the degree to which local people are aware of the Program’s intentions and to the degree to which *they* wish to take part in it.

A potentially more serious stumbling block to the program is what Fisher (1990) has identified as ‘institutional incompatibility’ between various levels in the program. Briefly he has examined three major areas of conflict. First, there has been the tendency for administrators to assume that there is a dearth of knowledge and institutional capacity in rural communities (which reflects the general perception of the superiority of western scientific knowledge). As a result, (at least) three problems arise. There is an emphasis on “teaching people the importance of forests” and “motivating” them, when in fact, “more often than not, failure to participate in forestry projects is from absence of perceived benefits rather than lack of knowledge or motivation” (Fisher 1990: 18). In fact, as a growing body of research attests, villagers know a great deal about local conditions - usually far more than outsiders. It is also often the case that existing use-rights and indigenous management systems are ignored. Emphasis is often placed on “forming” user groups rather than recognizing existing ones. A problem in this regard is that people who do not have locally recognized use-rights - but who may be poitically ro economically powerful - may be wrongly included in agreements. And while many researchers, and the government, have emphasized the importance of learning from and building upon indigenous systems, in practice, little attention has been given to existing systems in forest development (Fisher 1990: 18). As Fisher points out, each of these issues are instances where the customs of the Department of Forests have failed to take account of local customs.

The second area of conflict arises due to the overemphasis on committees as a form of organization. The hand-over process, and the decentralization legislation upon which it relies, depends heavily on formal committees as representative of user groups and as decision-making bodies (Fisher 1990: 18). This demonstrates one aspect of the Community Forestry Program where the influence of western values, that has so strongly shaped the program, may be in conflict with the local socio-cultureal context in rural communities. Fisher argues that this emphasis on formal committees is inappropriate for several reasons: committees are often absent in many effective indigenous forest management systems; where there are indigenous “committees”, they rarely conform to the formal Western model which is enshrined in the decentralization legislation, and;

committees are not always necessary, nor are they sufficient by themselves (Fisher 1990: 18-19).

The third area of conflict emerges due to the emphasis on politico-administrative boundaries, such as the now-defunct panchayat, in organizing community forestry. In the first place, several studies have demonstrated that panchayat boundaries did not necessarily coincide with user group boundaries. Rather the situation tended to be such that user groups were almost invariably smaller than panchayats and/or often crossed panchayat boundaries (Fisher 1990: 20). However, under the relevant legislation, there was no provision for a single section of forest to be handed over to more than one panchayat without being divided into separate sections. Also there was no provision for title to be handed over to anyone but the panchayat (Fisher 1990: 21). A second problem was that the panchayat was a political unit, so that placing responsibility for forest management into the panchayat arena had the effect of making it the subject of unnecessary conflict.[14] A further problem is that rural people in Nepal do not always have the same loyalties toward the panchayat or other political units as they have toward their own village or residence, their clan, or their caste (Fisher 1990: 21). As Fisher points out, the effect is that "handing forests over to the panchayat is seen by the government as handing forests to the community. [But] to the users, handing forests to the panchayat is often seen as taking them away and giving them to somebody else outside the 'community'" (1990: 21).

Conclusion

Since the 1950s, the Nepal Government's approach to forest management has changed dramatically. The government's first legislative attempts at actively 'managing' its forests came about in 1957 with the Forest Nationalization Act; an act which sought to *protect*, manage, and *conserve* Nepal's forests (despite their importance to a large part of the population in meeting subsistence needs). Much of the government's early legislation through the 1960s and early 1970s further elaborated on this theme of 'forest protection'. In this respect, Nepal's early forest management strategy was not unlike approaches elsewhere - including developing and developed countries alike - that advocated a 'tree-centered' model and which was based heavily on a western scientific paradigm. By the end of the 1970s, however, the government was finally beginning to recognize the importance of incorporating the needs and participation of local 'user groups' in forest management. Major steps in this direction were the National Forestry Plan, 1976, the Panchayat Forest, Panchayat Protected Forest, and Leasehold Forest Legislation passed in 1978. Yet, this recognition was slow to translate into policy. It was not until the Decentralization Act was passed in 1982 that local people were given *legal* power to control forest management (though responsibility still fell under village panchayat jurisdiction). Nevertheless, it was not until the government released it's Master Plan for the Forestry Sector in 1989, and its recommendations were finally promulgated in the Forest Act, 1993, that *priority* was given to 'user group' control. The Government of Nepal's Community Forestry Program is now defined as forestry development and management with the expressed purpose of meeting people's needs through their direct participation.

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[14] Fisher points out that political systems - and Nepal is no exception in this regard - are based strongly on conflict, whereas effective resource management must be based on at least a reasonable level of consensus. He does not deny that conflict about resources may appear in a user group, however, user groups are motivated to resolve such disputes. Within the panchayat arena, however, for those who are not forest users there is much less of an incentive to achieve consensus (Fisher 1990: 21).

As a forestry program it arose out of rural development approaches, specifically satisfying 'basic needs'. It also emerged at a time when concerns with deforestation and an environmental crisis afflicting the Himalayas were at their apex. Although the foundation of these concerns has over the last decade been seriously drawn into question, they nevertheless had a major impact on the attention and financial aid development agencies have given Nepal during the past 20 years. While there is a continuum upon which to include the variety of approaches and objectives encompassed within the term "community forestry", in Nepal the emphasis is on the participation of forest users in all aspects of the management process. It differs, then, from other types of 'community forestry' and forest development where, although an objective may involve enhancing the welfare of neighboring communities and including their participation to varying degrees, the primary objective is improving, maintaining, and/or protecting the biophysical component of the forest. Consequently, the role of the forest department and staff, as envisioned by the program, is primarily catalytic and technically supportive - and is a significant departure from the 'traditional', 'tree-centered' forestry model. This change appears to be very important to the success of the program. Whether or not this is the case will be discussed in the following chapter.

One of the Community Forestry Program's strengthes is that it publicly recognizes the dependence of Nepal's subsistence farmers on forest products. It also implicitly recognizes their capacity to manage the use of forest resources by incorporating, as part of the program, the organization of user groups who have been sanctioned to take control over the use and management of local forests. In so doing, it also reflects the capacity of existing indigenous systems of forest management which are known to exist in many areas throughout Nepal. Although the strategies, objectives and organizing principles upon which these indigenous systems are based vary (as do their appropriateness under various conditions and locales), the forest department is now, albeit slowly, beginning to recognize the role such systems can play in developing effective management plans. In addition, the program aims at giving greater control to local people in formulating management plans in consultation with local government forestry professionals. Thus, a fundamental aspect of the program is that it has the potential to empower local people who have been previously powerless in terms of resource control.

Despite what appears to be a genuine desire on behalf of the government to successfully carry out the Community Forestry Program, the rate of hand-over of forests to user-group control has been modest. Some of the weaknesses in the program which need to be overcome were introduced and briefly discussed. One area of concern is that the changing role of the Forest Department, from a regulatory agency to a facilitory one, has been slow. Also, the failure, in some cases, to adequately recognize indigenous management systems may create unnecessary delays in the implementation process. There is also a paradox between the need for flexibility in the implementation of the guidelines and the apparent rigidity of the guidelines themselves. As an example, the imposition of administrative procedures may, in some cases, be inappropriate to the level of capacity of some villagers to achieve given their literacy level and general administrative experience. The guidelines also dictate that all user groups form 'committees' for decision-making and the formulation of operational plans, despite the fact that such institutions may not exist in all indigenous management systems. Early reports of the program's implementation indicate that there may also be problems with respect to the potential for abuse of power among forestry staff. For instance, there are reports of forestry staff not releasing control over management to local users, and of user groups including members who are not forest users. Essentially, the problem stems from forest staff who do not adhere to the directives of the program. The next chapter will deal with the role of foresters in more detail.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICS AND CULTURE IN DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL

Introduction

Preceding chapters have focused upon factors which are seen as important in predicting the future success or failure of the Community Forestry Program. In Chapter One it was noted that certain structural features in the Government have worked against the empowerment of rural people. These features, which are predicated upon hierarchical inequity, are embedded within a complex of values which not only empower the system but which are connected to the value system of Nepal's Hindu ethos. This chapter will explore another key variable; the topic of values as it affects the development process, in general, and the Community Forestry Program, in particular.

There have basically been two major critiques of Nepal's development process, and both have dealt to varying degrees with the impact of values upon development. The first was Eugene Mihaly's (1965) *Foreign Aid and Politics in Nepal*, which explored development in terms of the goals and political agendas of foreign aid programs, and the impact that these agendas have had on development in Nepal. The second major critique was written by the Dean of Nepalese Anthropology, and the first Nepalese applied anthropologist, Dor Bahadur Bista, who is not only an academic, but a man who has a vast personal experience in development. Bista (1991), in *Fatalism and Development*, explores (among other things) the features of Nepal's value system that he believes have had a negative impact on development - a position which has not endeared him to his academic colleagues. Each will be considered in turn.

Foreign Aid and Development

Mihaly, in his analysis of foreign aid in Nepal, is primarily concerned with the political aspects of economic assistance and development. By examining the aims, methods and results of a number of foreign aid programs he demonstrates how the inherent political values of foreign governments - such as the United States, India, China and Russia - have affected economic assistance. While Mihaly's examination explores aid from several countries, United States assistance offers perhaps the clearest illustration of the impact of foreign values on the outcome of an aid program in Nepal.

United States Assistance

Mihaly's discussion describes how American values have structured the perception of Nepalese development needs. At the foundation of United States assistance was the assumption that the people of Nepal were experiencing a 'revolution of rising expectations'.[1] In other words, the people (and the government) of Nepal were eager, willing, and able to change. The widespread surge of nationalism following the Second World War attested to this revolution - or so it was believed. One of the conclusions the United States drew from this was that it was imperative that these newly aroused expectations be satisfied. If they were not, the alternative was likely some radical political solution - the greatest fear being Communism. The United States also believed that economic and political stability were somehow interdependent and furthermore, that *together* they would "increase the capacity and the will to resist internal and external communist aggression" (U.S. Govt. 1957; quoted in Mihaly 1965: 29). And finally, it was assumed that development was simply a matter of technical assistance. In other words, with a population eager for change the provision of technical advice and an increase in the knowledge base would have a catalytic effect - sparking a "chain reaction" (Mihaly 1965: 29-30) - and consequently foster a need to teach people to run democratic institutions.

However, Mihaly raises several critical questions related to these assumptions. First and foremost, did the 'revolution' in fact exist? And if such feelings did exist, were they prevalent in all strata of society? How was the utilization of aid specifically influenced and determined by the view that the masses were eager for a better life? What was the relationship between expectation of a better life and the willingness to experience (social, economic and political) change? And especially important, to what extent was the success of the aid made contingent upon the existence of this willingness?

The development programs the Nepal government embarked upon, with of course American encouragement and advice, began in 1952 with the Village Development Service, and were later followed by programs in agriculture, health and education. At first, the American objective was to have these programs manned and administered by the Government of Nepal. Over time, however, the emphasis of the American development effort gradually shifted. No longer were the projects to be simply administered by the Nepal Government, rather the Americans sought to use their projects as a means to develop institutions within the government that would enable Nepal to carry out even larger programs on its own (Mihaly 1965: 70).

In essence, then, part of the American objective was what has been labeled "nation-building"; an idea that if certain (western) values and institutions could be introduced, the recipient nation could become both productive and democratic. For example, a major thrust of village development (as well as the many other American assisted programs) was that it was geared towards creating a foundation for democracy. As Mihaly points out, village development was to be "a two-way channel - offering communication of the government's services to the people and the people's wants to the government" (1965: 32).

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[1] The belief that there was a 'revolution of rinsing expectations' was not, however, limited to the Nepalese context, but as Mihaly points out, also served as the "foundation and, to a large extent, the rationale of all American assistance programs" (1965: 28-29). This rationale is also frequently encountered in a large part of the development literature from that era. an example can be found in the work of Arensberg and Niehoff (1964).

> The Village Development Service is a multi-purpose organization which the Government of Nepal is building to have an organized effective means of distributing increasing services to the people and a channel through which people may pass their judgment about problems and solutions to the central government (USOM 1954: 10; quoted in Mihaly 1965: 32).

Relying heavily on the participation of Nepal's civil service, though both politically and theoretically appealing, was also in part a consequence of the United States' desire to provide only technical assistance (which it also believed would be less of a financial burden). Politically, the United States felt that some co-operation from local officials and citizens was important so as to reduce resentment among the recipients of aid and also to reduce the likelihood that project efforts might be thwarted. At the same time, it was felt that local participation was in theory the best method of ensuring that the recipients of aid would be able to maintain the projects on their own once aid was discontinued. Perhaps more importantly from the United States' standpoint, it afforded an additional means of supporting and possibly strengthening the government apparatus - a measure deemed necessary to prevent communist incursion - while simultaneously fulfilling American ambitions of shaping the social, political and economic character of Nepal in its own image (Mihaly 1965: 1).

Village development as a whole, however, was in conflict with the situation found throughout much of Nepal. A major problem, it appeared, was that rural people were not as receptive to change as the Americans believed. Recognizing that the reasons for this "are varied and complex", Mihaly does however identify two basic reasons for the apparent conservatism encountered in Nepalese villages (1965: 33). First, was the widespread fatalism often found in Hindu society (which will be examined in greater detail later in this chapter). Second, and more important in terms of the context of village development "was the fact that the land-tenure and ownership system in large segments of Nepal generated a strong conservative force" (Mihaly 1965: 33). Essentially, both these factors functioned to curtail the transfer of values latent in American assistance programs. Thus, what apparently happened was not what Americans envisioned. Rather, many of the western values they hoped to introduce were simply not absorbed.

An especially important factor that affected the success of the Village Development Service (as well as the majority of the American programs) was that it was dependent upon, and limited by, the graduates of the Kathmandu school who were employed as village development workers.[2] As Mihaly states (1965: 32-33):

> They were the primary element in the channel of communication…. Most of them were city born and bred - educated residents of Kathmandu. In common with city youth everywhere, they had little understanding of the problems of the farmer and little comprehension of the technical questions of agriculture. When sent into the countryside, any idealism they might have had melted away in the confrontation with an incomprehensible, uncomfortable, and hostile environment. Even when a trainee with the right background was found, however, the project made demands on him which usually he was unable to meet, for the programme required the trainees to be independent, to have great initiative, and to be able to teach others. In Nepalese society, where the joint family had not yet begun to crumble, where the young lived under a strict paternalism at home and initiative was discouraged by tradition, and where education was, at best, poor, this was an intolerably large order.

At the same time, "a village development worker introduced into the village was bound to fail unless he grasped the power structure of the village and learned to deal with the ruling groups"(Mihaly 1965: 34) - a situation which still poses a serious hurdle to development efforts. Thus, an additional problem was that at the time the Village Development Program was developed it failed to take into account the realities of rural political life. One wonders if the government is any wiser today. That is, if new programs, like the Community Forestry Program, have taken into account the current cultural and political realities in Nepal. As will be discussed further below, this was not the only obstacle the American Assistance program failed to consider.

Some Results of American Assistance

The political (and to a lesser degree economic) agendas of the United States, through the methods employed in project implementation, had a strong bearing on the results aid generated. As the situation with American assistance clearly testifies, their effectiveness was seriously curtailed by the choice to implement programs through the administration - which was in effect, an outcome of its assumptions regarding Nepal's willingness and ability for change. According to Mihaly, American notions regarding the administration's abilities in the provision of services were of dubious validity. He recognized that one of the greatest stumbling blocks was a civil service that had not yet transformed itself from the Rana period. The problem was that the civil service was not geared towards democratic development activities; quite simply, it was not *service* oriented. Mihaly also mentions how inaction, indecision and the struggle for power and influence continued to take precedence while competence largely remained irrelevant; essentially, the civil service continued to be utilized as a source of patronage (1965: 177).

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[2] The 'Kathmandu school' to which Mihaly refers was the village development training center that was opened in 1952 in Kathmandu to train development workers. The aim was that the first fifty trainees and those who followed shortly thereafter were to man a number of provincial centers where they would train further workers for development activities. It was hoped that eventually enough workers could be trained to provide one worker per 500 families (Mihaly 1965: 31).

Another problem the American's did not foresee was the outcome of an expanding administration. As was stated, a key feature of these programs was that they were manned and administered by the Nepal government. But when programs in education, health and agriculture were expanded, so too did the administration. Accordingly, this meant that the number of government institutions increased, which naturally led to a similar expansion in the ranks of the civil service. This created a tremendous financial drain. As a result, much of the increase in funds was needed to cover such recurring costs as salaries of the growing number of newly hired civil servants (Mihaly 1965: 72). In fact, American funds had become so important to the government of Nepal that they were needed "not only for the implementation of development projects but for the day-to-day costs of government…. [Moreover,] after a decade of American encouragement and government prodigality with resources, Nepal was left with a slender income, a bloated government apparatus, and substantial recurrent expenses" (Mihaly 1965: 122-23). Mihaly also suggests that, combined with a lack of economic development, some of the new administrative and financial demands created by aid may have made development, and some American objectives, even more difficult to achieve (1965: 139, 187).

A lack of administrative continuity also had a devastating impact on programs. The choice to work through the government and to base programs on building institutions within the government meant that American programs were highly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of Nepalese politics (Mihaly 1965: 72). With the tumultuousness of the political scene in the 1950s, and as the government was repeatedly replaced, purges of the civil service became a regular occurrence. In many cases, this crippled program efforts. At the same time, the fact that the same ministries which the projects were intended to develop had to administer them, meant that trouble was inevitable (Mihaly 1965: 71). Thus, Mihaly found that the cumbersomeness of the government, combined with the 'Rana style' of civil service that was still present, a number of conservative forces including a fatalistic belief system, and a landed elite with interests in maintaining the *status quo*, tended to defeat both the purpose of increasing government services and the ability to carry out administrative reform.

Essentially, Mihaly's analysis of foreign aid in Nepal chronicles the importance of the institutional values of foreign aid agencies and the impact they have had on the outcome of the development process in Nepal. In part, his discussion describes how the Americans believed that the developing world was undergoing a 'revolution of rising expectations', that this revolution could be satisfied with western, democratic institutions, and that the Nepalese themselves should (and could) be responsible for the administration of their own development and transformation. Therefore, the funds to support 'nation-building' and development activities were funded through the Nepalese government. The consequence of this 'democratic' sort of development notion was that the Nepal government expanded four-fold; as financial aid increased the bureaucracy increased. But despite the American influence, the functioning of the bureaucracy was little changed. In effect, the administrative system apparently managed to retain the majority of these resources for itself, rather than distribute them to the rural populace, to whom they were ultimately intended. In other words, the greater the development funding, the greater the rewards for the bureaucracy - and (many of) those working in it.[3]

In western terms, however, this is often classed as corruption. Western bureaucracies are based on "rationalized" structures designed around certain goals. They are measured or evaluated in terms of their abilities to meet stated institutional objectives. In this context, individual performance is measured against individual contributions towards the achievement of the institution's overall objectives. Also, recruitment to the institution is based upon qualifications relevant to the performance tasks defined in terms of facilitating institutional goals. Similarly, advancement in these institutions is based upon merit. In one sense, within this context corruption is defined as deviance from institutional objectives for personal gain. Consequently, westerners often observe Nepal's institutions as inefficient and corrupt because publicly defined institutional goals are frequently not met and there appears to be widespread evidence that public funds have been reallocated for personal gain. And when development resources from donor agencies are distributed through government channels, as they have been in most cases, then the effectiveness in "western" terms of the distribution of these resources to their intended targets raises very serious questions as to the potential success of a proposed project - such as the Community Forestry Program that is predicated upon a western administrative model.

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[3] Some have observed that the bureaucracy in Nepal has developed in such a way that it has become especially efficient in harvesting development funds that have been designed for rural programs. The result is an administrative system where, instead of resources being distributed to the rural populace, the intended beneficiaries, resources are directed (or *misdirected*) to the families and associates to whom administrators have greater obligations.

However, could it be that the government administrative structure is not nearly as inept as many westerners seem to think, but is rather simply "marching to the beat of a different drummer"? Could it be that some government officials, on the one hand, publicly subscribe to donor agency goals in order to gain funding while at the same time behave along well established traditional means? If that is the case, then the government institutions are, in a traditional sense, operating quite effectively. Since this pattern seems to be historically based and has persisted over time, it is necessary to consider the political values that are involved in the functioning of Nepali administrative institutions. In other words, the question that remains for the social scientist is, how does this happen?

Chakari: A Political Institution

The fact that the manner in which the majority of all administrative appointments has been based neither on 'merit' nor the individual's qualifications, has in fact left several scholars, in addition to Bista, to criticize Nepali political behavior (English 1985; Caplan 1975). According to English, and reflecting the views of many critics from the west, it is primarily through patronage, nepotism and high-caste affiliation that political (and economic) power has been (and continues to be) distributed (1985: 74).

As important a role as *pajani* (the annual review system used in the administration) may have played in fostering the notion that (at least theoretically) anyone could become part of the political elite, such was not the case. For instance, (in theory) the annual *pajani* should operate as a means to ensure that administrative positions were filled with the most qualified personnel. A number of reports suggest that this was seldom the case (Caplan 1975; Bista 1991). Rather, recruitment into and promotion within the administration has been strongly dependent upon personal relations. Winning the personal favor of a high official, for example, counted more in determining tenure than any demonstration of ability (Caplan 1975: 35).[4] As a result, when seeking an administrative post, it was a common practice for members of the public to attend a high ranking official regularly, to present him with small gifts, or perform unsolicited services, over a period of time. This type of behavior was known as *Chakari*.

According to Bista (1991), *chakari* originated from, and reflects, the essential Hindu values and ritual practices of obeisance, or submissiveness. It became especially prominent in secular life during the Rana period, where it functioned primarily as a means to control potential rivals and their supporters. It was then extended over time to the governing classes and then to all in various positions of power. Essentially, *chakari* involves flattery or obsequiousness towards a superior by a subordinate who wishes to obtain the favors of the superior. Kondos (1987), who has written on the subject in depth, stresses three main elements in *chakari*: 1) flattery is its conspicuously distinctive ingredient; 2) it entails a relationship between unequals; and 3) its main field of play is the political arena. Most important to understanding the significance of *chakari*, is that it is a particular mode of establishing a relationship of *reciprocal obligations* (Kondos 1987: 22).[5]

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[4] Conversely, a high official is said to be evaluated by the lower ranks in the administration more by his success in protecting and advancing his clients than in the skill and efficiency with which he performs his duties (Rose and Fisher 1970: 69-70).

Bista attributes the continued existence of *chakari*, *afno manchhe*, and 'source force' to the presence of fatalism and dependency in the Nepali belief system, which he argues is manifest in the "harmonious cooperative social behavior within indigenous groups" and which continues to operate in Nepal (1991: 4). *Chakari* and *afno manchhe*, according to Bista, encourages problems of inclusion-exclusion as group members gain particular privileges, thereby impeding "cooperative action", increasing factionalism and corruption, and thus leading to the "malfunctioning of development" (Bista 1991: 4; *also refer to* Caplan 1971; Mihaly 1965). Kondos, however, is much less pessimistic as to their continued persistence. According to him, the value of partiality is embedded in the everyday orientation Nepalis have in seeking goals. Nepalis resort to 'favoritism' in their everyday encounters with administration; quite simply, it constitutes a legitimate way of going about things within the traditional Hindu socio-cultural structure (Kondos 1987). Even during the period of the 1950s and 1960s when there was a major thrust towards a more democratic political structure, this undertaking was primarily instigated by a small minority of political elites, rather than the populace at large, who continued to rely on the traditional 'source force' and *chakari* practices (Kondos 1987).

Although these social relations have their origin in the past, they continue to be a very important and ubiquitous part of the present political system in Nepal. Understanding how chakari operates, and its role in the functioning of the administration, in one respect, reveals that the government is not as inept, or 'corrupt', as many western observers believe. Getting resources out of the bureaucracy then, is not so much a question of competency but rather a question of values.

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[5] The process in establishing a *chakari* relationship requires, first, that the initiator expend a great deal of time and energy in simply "being seen" by the superior. This is then followed by the need for face-to-face interaction which will include a continuous flow of compliments and flattery. The next, and "climactic stage", in the process of establishing the chakari relationship is the prestation of a 'gift', usually in kind, which will be a private affair, unlike the public nature of the 'flattery' (Kondos 1987: 22). According to Kondos, the gift constitutes an extremely special expression of flattery in that it is a "very potent symbolic act"; gifts are given only to superiors, and they are seen to announce "in the most convincing mode possible in this culture, the recognition and endorsement of difference between the parties" (1987: 22). Kondos also stresses that having "symbolically sealed the relationship", the initiator must still continuously flatter and reinforce the inferior/superior form of the relationship with intermittent prestations before the supplicant can expect to receive a favor in return for his demonstrated devotion. In some cases, *chakari* behavior may even become a lifetime occupation, and may result in great rewards (Bista 1991). It is important to note, however, that paying compliments, praising and generally being obsequious, does not in itself necessarily constitute evidence that a *chakari* relationship exists.

Fatalism and Development

However, the practices of chakari and source force are not isolated values. Rather, they are part of a larger value complex that forms Nepali culture, and which Bista collectively refers to as 'Brahmanism'.[6] The key elements - the values and institutions - which are the basis of this cultural system include a caste structure, fatalistic beliefs, and a hierarchical orientation. While Bista's argument has by no means escaped criticism, it does afford a highly valuable and critical examination of the affects certain aspects of Nepali culture and social organization are likely to have on development. In particular, Bista is concerned with how the above values, beliefs and institutions (including Nepal's system of education) are used to support the elite structure in Nepali society, how they serve to perpetuate the *status quo*, and how together they contribute to make social, political, and economic change all that much more difficult. The remainder of this chapter, then, will endeavor to present Bista's general argument as it pertains to development in Nepal.

Caste Issues

Caste has long been an appealing target for western critics of Nepali society. In many circles, caste is often regarded as a major cause of Nepal's development difficulties. In other contexts however, associating any developmental problem with 'caste' is to be strictly avoided.[7] In any case, issues of caste are not as straightforward as generally perceived (Bista 1991: 3). For instance, although Nepal has long been Hindu in a very general sense, a stratified caste system has only marginally penetrated society. Indeed, it is only in the past hundred and forty years - since the promulgation of the Muluki Ain in 1854 - that the caste system gained any kind of endorsement (Bista 1991: 29). Of particular importance is the fact that the caste system has been supported only by a minority of the populace. When first introduced into Nepal, acceptance of the caste structure was in part dictated by its acceptance among many of the various ethnic groups. In effect, it has been confined to particular classes of particular ethnic groups. But though supported only by a minority, it is an extremely powerful minority; situated socially, politically, and often economically, at the elite level of Nepali society (Bista 1991: 29).

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[6] Bista points out that the use of this term is not meant to be associated necessarily with those from a Brahman background and that in fact, "many people from this background are actually busy fighting the syndrome, while many people from a non-Brahman background are busily engaged in pushing the various forms of the archaic ideology inherent in the stratified caste system" (Bista 1991: 3). Moreover, the people who imposed the system upon the Nepali society were not the Brahmans - they were weak, dependent immigrants at the time. Rather, it was the local ruling elite who were responsible for doing this by applying Brahmanic principles for further entrenchment of their own class status. (Bista 1991: 3-4).)

[7] Donald Messerschmidt recounts how when he was first employed in development in Nepal, he was told by his superiors not to mention 'caste' as being in any way a hindrance to project success (pers. comm.).

Caste concepts have been in Nepal in the form of Vaisnavism since the beginning of the Licchavi era (*see Chapter One*). But when the Gupta kings introduced Vaisnavic culture, they did not impose a division of labor and craft specialization as is commonly associated with the caste system found in India (Bista 1991: 35). They, and the Licchavis, did however fashion themselves Kshatriyas (Chetri), maintaining Brahmans from the south as their personal priests. Consequently, though Vaisnavism and elements of caste were introduced (as evidenced in the designations of Brahman and Chetri), the caste system in its entirety was never adopted; moreover, it was of importance primarily to the Brahman and Chetri elites for whom it was a means to reinforce their position at the highest level of society. As for the rest of society - associated mainly with the Kathmandu Valley - pre-existing class structures continued to dominate the social organization just as before.

The discrepancy between popular religion and that of the elites was further reinforced by the priestly Brahman's lack of interest in creating a local priesthood (Bista 1991: 35). Instead, they were interested only in creating client castes, thereby setting in motion a process that would foster a greater reliance upon Brahmans as important members of the elite and which would further the infusion of Hindu (notably Brahmanic) beliefs and values. At the top of the caste hierarchy, then, stood the Brahman (*Bahun*) and Thakuri, followed by the Chetri and Shrestha. While the Brahman and Chetri elites formed the majority of those following Vaisnavism a small number of Khas and Magar also took the Chetri title. Their interest however, was mainly in legitimizing their upper class position within society (Bista 1991: 36). In fact, the acceptance of caste in Nepal has been limited to the extent that it has proven useful in consolidating class privileges - notably those consistent with a hierarchical orientation (Bista 1991: 3).

Nevertheless, while the caste system as it is found in Nepal today may have penetrated Nepali society to a greater extent than it had initially, it is not as rigorous as is frequently believed, and in fact, varies greatly from the orthodox caste societies found elsewhere (Bista 1991: 3). In some circumstances pollution is attached to certain elements within the social structure, and the structure is typically ascriptive. But pollution in Nepal is not attached to caste in quite the same way it is in India, for instance. Rather, there is a degree of personal interaction among the castes that would never be tolerated where pollution was an important factor (Bista 1991: 99). And despite expectations of a rigid caste structure, the Nepali caste system is permeable to the extent that it affords the opportunity of caste mobility: mobility is possible yet extremely difficult to achieve. One means of accomplishing this is through education. However, educational opportunities are not equally available to all members of society, and although an education is a crucial component in the process of procuring an administrative position, it is not necessarily sufficient in itself.

Fatalism

Religion has always been a central feature of Nepali life. Shamanism, Shaivism, Buddhism, Tantrism, and Vaisnavism are all prominent, yet Nepal has managed to avoid any form of religious fanaticism (Bista 1991: 3). Nevertheless, Nepal is a Hindu state, and based on government statistics nearly 90 percent of the population is Hindu (HMG 1987: 85). More importantly, Hinduism (or more precisely 'Brahmanism') forms the basis of the set of values and beliefs that predominate among the elites in society; a group that consists primarily of people from a high-caste background. According to Bista, the most notable of these values is the absolute belief in fatalism: that one has no personal control over one's life circumstances, which are determined through a divine or powerful external agency. As these values have consequences on the Nepali sense of time, the concept of planning, orientation to the future, and sense of causality, Bista believes they ultimately have the potential to affect the Nepali capacity to develop (1991: 4).

Bista identifies then, a cluster of cultural elements, including but extending beyond that of caste, that play a very important, though largely negative, role in Nepal's attempt at change. These cultural elements are connected particularly with fatalistic hierarchy, which has a following within a restricted but critically important sector of Nepali society. But as this sector has played and continues to play the central role in the bureaucracy, it includes those who are in positions to control and influence development initiatives - including new legislation and access to political and forest resources. Although this emergent "hierarchic subculture", as Bista calls it, is a minority and is not representative of all the Nepali people, it is the most powerful group in Nepali society (1991: 76). And although fatalistic attitudes are for the most part concentrated among these political and economic elites, none of Nepal's ethnic groups are immune from its influences or its impact (Bista 1991: 6).

Most Nepalis of the present generation, and especially those from the Chetri and Brahman castes, have been brought up according to a belief system that posits that one's circumstances have been determined by a supreme deity - that their lives have been fated (Bista 1991: 77). The impact of fatalism on purposeful problem-solving and goal-achievement behavior is rather important. If the course of events is already determined then it makes little sense to attempt to independently influence their outcome (Bista 1991: 77).[8] While prayer is open to all, only initiated Brahman pundits can function as priests. However, other Brahman activities are open to the lower castes; in particular, those associated with the acquisition of an education - the learned activities of reading, writing and engaging in debate (Bista 1991: 78). By emulating these activities low caste members often anticipate receiving the social benefits of high caste, and eventual identification with high caste status (in addition to the adoption of fatalistic values). Being educated, then, has an auspicious connection with high caste status.

But under this Hindu system (which is stratified and fatalistic) one has also to engage in activities that are appropriate to one's caste (Bista 1991: 79). Those whose fate it is to be workers continue to work, but this work does not necessarily lead to any form of result or reward. Indeed, Hinduism admonishes that actions must be without 'desire' (i.e., without a goal [Bista 1991: 79]). Of course, there is a purpose to action, but it is known only to a supernatural agency.

In contrast to those who must work, high caste people have always despised physical labor. They are accustomed to believing, as well as teaching others to believe, that erudition and ritual are the only important things; that there is no dignity in labor (Bista 1991: 79). Furthermore, Hinduism teaches that material wealth and prosperity are the concern of the vulgar and low. Today's intellectual elite, therefore, consider it fashionable to condemn or despise anyone who achieves either position or prosperity through personal industry (Bista 1991: 79). Anyone who is educated, and thereby is in a position to identify with the traditional role of the high caste, would never want to work (Bista 1991: 81). Indeed, not only do a great majority of the educated people not want to work themselves but expect that others will do what needs to be done by them. For example, Bista has observed that as a career objective in modern Nepal, most Nepalis try to have a *jagir*, a salaried job where one does not have to work but will still receive a pay cheque at the end of each month (1991: 80). Candidates for various administrative positions still show their zeal and enthusiasm for work at the time of applying, but in such jobs one does not expect to actually work. When the majority of the educated share this perspective, little work actually gets done (Bista 1991: 81).

The Nepali sense of responsibility, according to Bista, is greatly affected by fatalism. Under fatalism, "responsibility is continually displaced to the outside, typically to the supernatural. [Thus,] there is a constant external focus for the individual, as the external is the locus of power, of pleasure and prosperity, and punishment" (Bista 1991: 80).[9] Combined with the possibility that one's decisions may be a mistake, or worse, may run counter to the interests of a member of a powerful *afno manchhe* circle or even one's own, decision-making becomes a risky business. It is not uncommon then, that as the level of responsibility increases within the administration, fewer decisions are actually made.

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[8] According to Bista, Nepalis do perceive that personal effort might have some long term consequence, but only if it has some resonance at supernatural levels and only within parameters set by a supernatural decree. Consequently, the only kind of action that can influence one's destiny are those with religious merit. The importance of this model of behavior, which is provided by the Brahman priests, lies in the fact that these traditional activities are idealized as those most associated with future success (Bista 1991: 77-78).

> Doing something means taking responsibility for it, and when something is done badly, failure is attributed to incompetence. So to keep an administrative position for as long as possible, the best strategy is to act as little as possible, so that the danger of dismissal is diminished. A general rule for working in such a bureaucracy is: the lower you are the more active you are, because you have high aspirations and are working hard to realize them; the higher you are, the greater you are at risk and the less you do. (Bista 1991: 110.)[10]

Education and Social Hierarchy

Western education has often, and somewhat ethnocentrically, been touted as a way of liberating 'backward societies' form their backwardness. In Nepal, western education has been integrated into the general socio-political culture, and in the process has become a mechanism for maintaining the *status quo* and a recruiting device for the elite.

The Buddhist educational system that predominated during the earlier portion of the Licchavi period was a significant source of engineering, metallurgical, and architectural skills. In contrast the Sanskritic tradition which replaced it around the eleventh century, typically consisted of learning, ritual, prayer, and the reading of religious texts. However, as Bista illustrates, the most important consequence of the transition from Buddhist to Sanskritic schools was that education no longer functioned as a means to acquire practical skills and had become accessible almost exclusively to those of high-caste. Gradually, education ceased to have relevance for the majority of the population as the connection between education and productive activity disappeared and was replaced with a more narrow orientation towards ritual life (Bista 1991: 117). While education was initially (in the Buddhist tradition) accessible to those for whom "an education was appropriate", access became increasingly confined only to high-caste children.

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[9] As a contrast, westerners are highly internalized, with a strong sense of inner personal control, and their social behavior is regulated by a similarly internalized sense of responsibility (Bista 1991: 80).

[10] A variation of not doing work is to pass it up to a higher level. Decisions are being constantly deferred to the top, which, until recently, was ultimately the King. Alternatively, decisions can be passed on to a committee, thereby diffusing responsibility through collective action (Bista 1991: 110).

Attempting to follow India's lead, where the British educational system was in practice, Jung Bahadur Rana founded the first British style school in Nepal; however, it was situated within the confines of the Rana's palace and was accessible only to Rana children (Bista 1991: 118). Later, as the school was moved from the palace grounds and was theoretically opened to all, in effect it remained accessible only to those in the Rana family or non-Rana children of high-caste. With an emphasis on an English curriculum, the knowledge and skills acquired proved especially valuable in dealing with the outside world; both politically and economically (Bista 1991: 119). Thus all graduates of the school were employed by the Ranas in some administrative capacity. Eventually, a school education became a prerequisite to employment in various important government positions, but more importantly it came to symbolize power and prestige. On the whole, the Nepali educational system produced recruits for the government, while most professionals, whether doctors, engineers or architects, were the products of Indian or overseas schools (Bista 1991: 121).

During the 1950s, following the opening of Nepal's borders and an influx of foreign aid, activities in the government sector began to expand rapidly. This created both white and blue collar jobs at a dramatic rate. Even people with only marginal qualifications (those with at least a small amount of education) could find attractive administrative jobs. The impact on the general populace was profound. Enrollment at existing schools and colleges began to swell beyond their capacities, and this created demand for even more institutions (Bista 1991: 121). But, according to Bista, there was "still no widespread sense of the general importance of education for the country as a whole" (1991: 121). Moreover, the value of an education derived solely from the assurance of an administrative position, the provision of which it was assumed would last indefinitely. This presents serious problems even today, as many graduates have *expected* an unlimited number of administrative positions to remain available (Messerschmidt: pers. comm.).

In the 1950s, formal qualifications, and especially a diploma of graduation, became a significant factor in acquiring a job - though it was not sufficient by itself. This affected the general educational process by promoting a 'certificate orientation' at the cost of the quality of education (Bista 1991: 122). Even the motivation to eventually improve the school system was based on the fact that education had become a necessary requisite for certain jobs (not to mention that it had become a symbol of prestige in itself). Because, traditionally, education was designed solely for the high caste and highly placed people, newly educated people have tended to equate themselves with these classes. In effect, education "has made them socially equal with prosperous people" (Bista 1991: 129). Furthermore, the educated consider themselves purer and of higher status than those who are uneducated and who perform physical work (Bista 1991: 129). Because education in the English Schools was the privilege of the higher-classes, when they became accessible to a larger segment of the population it was seen by many as an opportunity for higher class status.

Thus by the 1960s, education had become a symbol of status, as high school and college diplomas and degrees were being used simply for the purpose of acquiring higher status, and as mobility in society was not the simple outcome of caste. Nevertheless, as Bista notes, Nepal is in some respects too strong an ascriptive rather than an achievement oriented society to allow much mobility (1991: 99). Though school and college graduation was necessary for job advancement, they were not the only factors involved. Indeed, academic qualification, training, background, working discipline, integrity of character and other such attributes have not been as important or helpful as the sense of belonging to a particular *afno manchhe* circle (Bista 1991: 98). Securing a position, then, still required one use the traditional practice of *chakari* and cultivate the correct *afno manchhe*: in the final analysis *afno manchhe* and *chakari* remained the critical elements and not job skills or qualifications (Bista 1991: 124). Moreover, much of the effort of those in the bureaucracy continued to revolve around the cultivation of personal ambition.

According to Bista, while success in gaining a prestigious position within the government administration depended, to a certain degree, on having the appropriate formal qualifications (as well as having the right *afno manchhe* connections), the qualifications themselves remained of little importance.[11] In fact, it is only recently that the education system has been available to provide the opportunities for any occupational mobility (Bista 1991: 130). This new mobility, however, has been largely in one direction, towards politics and administrative jobs which are considered to be the only respectable professions (Bista 1991: 130). For the higher-castes, these two fields are the only ones, outside priesthood, which could be undertaken without the risk of losing their hierarchic caste position.[12] Consequently, these occupations have acquired a great deal of prestige as they have become associated particularly with high caste. These professions are also the only ones where non-high caste people can work at the same level as the thread-wearing high caste, so that they are seen as a means of acquiring status (Bista 1991: 130). Becoming a politician or an administrator then has, through association, become synonymous with status mobility (Bista 1991: 130).

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[11] A good example of this is found in the motivation in getting a technical degree. Not only do the technical trades not appeal to Nepali youth today when choosing their occupation, they are typically associated with low status. The qualifications gained in pursuing a technical degree, however, are valid qualifications for political and administrative positions, and it is only because of this that students become interested in a technical education. The purpose of going to the technical school, then, is to acquire the qualifications needed for entering the administration, and not to acquire the skills needed to pursue some technical professional activity. Indeed, many people are not working in the technical professions for which they were formally trained, including those educated at universities abroad; instead they aim for political and administrative jobs. (Bista 1991: 130.)

While it is difficult enough for ethnic minority members to take advantage of any educational opportunities available to them, by doing so they also become prone to experiencing special forms of acculturation as a result of the educational process and the values and attitudes associated with it (Bista 1991: 57). Ethnic minority families are typically very poor and dependent on their children's labor for survival, and most often cannot afford the luxury of sending them to school - which, in any case, tends to be reserved for upper caste or upper class children (Bista 1991: 57). Those that do get an education are therefore from elite families - families that tend to be successful economically and socially. According to Bista, those who are able to go on to higher educational levels also tend to adopt high caste attitudes, as the permeability in the Nepali caste system offers the hopes of caste mobility (1991: 57). Consequently, their educational and economic distinctiveness facilitates their elevation to high status within the local community, which then influences the infusion of fatalism and hierarchic caste principles into their general outlook. A hierarchic attitude is often developed, and part of the process often requires the rejection of their low caste or ethnic background (Bista 1991: 57).[13] Education then is not looked upon as an act of acquiring intellectual powers or technical skills but is another form of ritualistic behavior. On being educated the world view of some students may be modified, and acculturation may support the development of genuinely instrumental ideas, but this is not the common response to education in Nepal, and regardless of the level of education attained, fatalistic-hierarchic ideas remain the core that determine the behavior of the individual (Bista 1991: 78).[14]

The situation, as Bista describes it, suggests that the effects of the caste structure, fatalism, dependency and Nepal's educational system pose serious problems for the efficacy of the bureaucracy and the capacity of Nepal to develop - with several factors playing a crucial role. First scholarship in the Sanskritic tradition is associated with privilege rather than labor. And as education is traditionally the prerogative of the high-castes and upper class, possessing an education is a powerful symbol of status. Also, education is not perceived as a means of acquiring skills that can be used productively to secure economic prosperity but rather is seen as an end in itself. Once achieved it signifies higher status, and in association with which the privileges of status are expected automatically (Bista 1991: 6). Furthermore, as educational opportunities have increased and became accessible to lower classes, the educated lower class likewise use education as a means to rapid social advancement, but the traditional route is used (Bista 1991: 6). If acquiring an education is perceived as a means to gain status, then it is also likely that there is an expectation that it will be immediately associated with privilege. To become educated, then, is perceived as a means to be effectively removed from the workforce (Bista 1991: 6). The result, according to Bista, is that within such an atmosphere a genuinely productive professional workforce can never be developed so that professional activities must continue to be performed by the untrained. As an example, this is reflected in the Forest Department where many District Forestry Officers (DFOs), in addition to having no real desire to 'work' in the field, lack many of the necessary skills required to act as 'extension agents', dealing with local people to help formulate operational plans (*see* Gronow 1987; Metz 1991; Messerschmidt 1989, 1990b).

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[12] Recall that alternate professions are not available outside of those prescribed by the circumstances of birth. In many ways, the idea of occupational mobility remains novel to Nepalis and is not strongly internalized (Bista 1991: 130).)

[13] One of the consequences of this is the ethnic community's loss of the ambitious and mobile, who still have a long way to go to be accepted in a higher caste, and which may be possible only for their descendants (Bista 1991: 57). Having a dubious position within the caste society of the capital, the high-caste attitude at that point provides the only immediate and even remotely accessible social reality, which again forces the individual into reorienting to a hierarchic caste perspective (though as an objective the higher status will always be unattainable) (Bista 1991: 57).

[14] Verses 19-23, chapter IV, of the *Bhagavad Gita* eloquently emphasize the discipline of freeing oneself from desire, purpose and any instrumental action; and the *Bhagavad Gita* is very highly regarded by all high caste Hindus (Bista 1991: 78).

Worst of all, those that do have a productive orientation towards education, and have gone ahead to acquire technical and professional skills with the intention of using these to the benefit of development, are usually not recognized and are not considered as appropriate role models. While many such 'innovative' individuals abound, they tend to be given subsidiary positions in the bureaucracy (Messerschmidt: pers. comm.). In essence they are viewed as social deviants, or outcasts - though valuable outcasts nonetheless. When innovative ideas are needed their contribution is sought; however, they are too 'dangerous' in that they threaten the *status quo*. In such cases, the issue is one of conformity versus non-conformity. But non-conformity carries with it too heavy a burden when such values and practices as fatalism, a hierarchical orientation, *chakari* and others are so pervasive a part of the bureaucracy - and society.

Even numerous Nepali students who have been educated abroad face difficulties conforming upon their return. But the pressures are nonetheless quite great. Many have returned not only with advanced degrees in various professional capacities but often with ambitions to enact change. A majority come from high caste backgrounds, and while visiting foreign places, they have been influenced by other cultures, and have learnt something of the values and psychology necessary for success in the modern (viz. 'western') world (Bista 1991: 137). Upon their return many are placed in positions of authority, as they represent the cream of Nepal's manpower resources. But as Bista states,

> though they may be initially inspired by a high degree of idealism, the new values that they bring back with them immediately confront fatalism and are typically defeated by it. Some return to their basic fatalistic beliefs. Others may even have a sense of what needs to be changed but are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task and simply surrender to their basic passivity and the belief that they cannot personally contribute to that change. (Bista 1991: 137-8.)

With so much at stake in their conformity, and as a hierarchical orientation, *chakari*, and other values and practices dominate the bureaucracy, they are often faced with no other option than to eventually resign to the established order of doing things.

Conclusion

Values can play a quite significant role in the outcome of development efforts. Often it is simply assumed that the conservative values of the recipients of, or targets for, development - the local villagers - are in conflict with the methods and objectives of development. It has been demonstrated in this chapter, however, that in Nepal's experience with development, values are important in terms of two additional sets of issues.

Mihaly's analysis of development efforts in Nepal illustrates that as a result of the influence of foreign aid agencies, western values have had a significant bearing on the types of projects being carried out, the method of implementation and their outcome. At the same time, it demonstrates the limitations of economic assistance not only as a tool for realizing the aims of the donor's agenda, whether it be political, social and/or economic, but also for facilitating development. In particular, economic aid fared badly in promoting gradual social (viz. democratic) change - an objective especially encouraged by the United States. As the results of American assistance attest, its success was contingent on the accuracy of the set of assumptions upon which its agenda was shaped.

Mihaly also points out that while the American effort took for granted that the people of Nepal were experiencing 'rising expectations' it failed to ask whether or not there were any possible obstacles to aid. In Chapter One it was suggested that despite the rhetoric of political change it appeared that the administration continued to operate much as it had historically; that is, for the benefit of the government. Mihaly's examination of American aid demonstrates that this was indeed the case, and that as a result of a civil service that was essentially unprepared for administering development, the impact on development programs has been largely negative - and quite possibly making future development more difficult to achieve. As Mihaly states, American aid was not effective in furthering its agenda precisely because it was "structured to meet desires and wants that [did] not exist and to cope with a readiness for change that [had] not yet materialized" (1965: 187).

The outcome of a development project is the result of a number of complex variables. The political culture of foreign aid agencies with its imbedded value system is one aspect among many variables. A second aspect is the influence of the political culture of the host country, in this case Nepal. Bista's study, arguably the most exhaustive examination of Nepal's political and cultural system, explored how certain values and institutions in Nepali society may influence not only the way in which the administration is perceived and operates but also the attitudes of the elite towards change.

Bista basically argues that Nepal's caste structure, belief in fatalism, and educational system, a set of values refered to as 'Brahmanism', have combined to produce a situation that is likely to have a strong bearing on development programs which threaten the *status quo* and/or are dependent upon social, political or economic change. In particular, his discussion of fatalism demonstrates how the traditional Nepali value system may pose as an obstacle to the adoption of values (i.e., western democratic values) deemed necessary for successful development. Similarly, Bista's argument illustrates how politico-cultural processes such as *chakari* and 'source force', which have been used quite effectively to maintain the old administrative system, may also have adverse affects on 'democratically designed' programs - such as the new Community Forestry Program.

CONCLUSION

In an effort to assess the likely success or failure of the Community Forestry Program in Nepal, this thesis set about to examine four factors, or sets of factors, identified as having the greatest impact on the outcome of the program. These factors have included: 1) the socio-political institutions and political framework of the Nepal Government; 2) the compatibility of the program with the cultural institutions and social organization of Nepal's many ethnic groups; 3) the design and implementation of the program, and 4) the impact that values - both western development values and the 'Nepalese ideological system' - have on development. In considering the impact of these factors on the program, much of the examination has been based on Foster's notion of 'syncretism'; a concept which asserts that people will more easily accept innovations, such as those introduced as part of a development program, that are compatible with their current cultural system. While the Community Forestry Program is a development program that offers great potential for dealing with a variety of social, economic, and environmental issues of concern to Nepal and its inhabitants, the discussion in this thesis suggests that there are, however, a number of problems, or issues, that ultimately need to be resolved in order for the program to successfully realize its objectives.

As the Community Forestry Program has been initiated, designed, and most importantly, is being implemented by the Government of Nepal, the capacity of the administration to implement the program is an especially critical factor affecting the program's success. When the administration was first taking form during the Shah and Rana periods, its primary purpose was to collect taxes. Essentially, it developed as an *extractive* arm of the government, and was therefore devoid of any notion of *service* to its citizens. However, due in part to the political exigencies of the 1950s and 1960s, combined with the economic aid Nepal began accepting in support of foreign encouraged, and government administered, development programs, the administration's role was immediately transformed. In other words, it became imperative that the administration function as a true 'civil service'. This new role was especially critical during and since the panchayat era, where the orientation of the civil service was to be geared especially towards assisting the government and particularly the people in various development activities.

A review of Nepali politics, however, suggests that the civil service has remained very much unchanged. Indeed, based on the discussion in Chapter One, and supported by many of the observations made by both Mihaly and Bista which were presented in Chapter Four, it appears that many of the characteristics of previous eras, such as inaction, indecision, the use of the civil service as a source of patronage, and the struggle for power and prestige, have continued to be some of the administration's most prominent characteristics. Furthermore, it appears that these characteristics may prove to be quite incompatible with the (latent 'western') objectives of the Community Forestry Program.

Similar to some of the problems encountered in the capacity of the administration to effectively carry out the implementation of the program, is the role that hierarchical caste principles have played in fostering a socio-political system where power and privilege has been concentrated among a rather select segment of the population. Like the administration, the concentration of power and privilege among high-caste Hindus - particularly, though not exclusively, rural elites - has remained virtually unchanged (and unchallenged) for centuries. One aspect of this situation, is that many local level politicos (many of whom have maintained their position of power and privilege through a number of changes in the government) have managed to retain the ability to manipulate government policies and programs to their own advantage - which are often in competition with the aims of development programs. With respect to the Community Forestry Program in particular, strong hierarchical tendencies may also make it difficult for members of the civil service, and especially DOF staff (who are responsible for implementing the program and often come from high-caste backgrounds), to place the interests of the actual forest users above their own, or those to whom they have important obligations.

As the Community Forestry Program has been designed to meet the needs of Nepal's rural populace, the vast majority of whom are subsistence farmers and to whom forests and forest products play a vital part in their livelihood, compatibility between the program and Nepalese rural culture is vital to the success of the program. While there are several case studies of successful implementation of the program, a situation which suggests at least some degree of compatibility between the program and the institutions and characteristics of some of Nepal's many ethnic groups, a thorough review of the literature indicates that there are simply too many groups for whom we simply do not have an adequate understanding, especially with respect to forest use and management.

One of Nepal's most fascinating features, its tremendous ethnic and cultural diversity, also serves to highlight the limitations of our understanding of Nepalese rural life. That Nepal's many ethnic groups are not situated in discrete enclaves, but rather are dispersed and interwoven in a complex matrix of communities, makes it especially difficult to determine how appropriate the program is for the entire country. For example, some studies suggest that socio-economic heterogeneity in local communities may act as a barrier to community forestry (Pandey and Yadama 1990). This would indicate that social and economic equality among members of user groups may be a necessary ingredient for successful forest management. As caste is based on "lineality, hierarchy, and individualism" and creates a tendency among Brahmans and Chetris to maximize their achieved status, this in turn would suggest that caste may have a negative impact in contexts where cooperation is crucial (Messerschmidt 1981: 99). However, other studies have also demonstrated that equality may not be as important as equity in distribution of benefits, and that cooperation - such as is necessary for community forestry - can exist in some hierarchical social contexts with little strain: "the work gets done, the risk-spreading, exchanging, and sharing take place, but not according to egalitarian principles" (Bennett 1979: 13; quoted in Messerschmidt 1981: 99). In essence then, although much anthropological research has been done, and our understanding of the peoples of Nepal has grown tremendously over the last two and a half decades, we simply do not have a comprehensive enough knowledge of the many ethnic groups to know how groups will respond, whether the program is appropriate in all contexts, or what barriers may exist at the institutional or cultural level.

From the standpoint of the Program itself, Community Forestry is often heralded as an excellent opportunity to entrust forest management to the people for whom control over forest resources is of major importance. By empowering local people, the Community Forestry Program simultaneously recognizes the dependence of rural people on forest products, their capacity to manage forest resources, and the intrinsic value of the multiplicity of Nepalese rural culture. The program also represents perhaps the most feasible means of effectively ensuring the protection - through sustainable use - of such a valuable natural resource, as management exclusively by Nepal's Forest Department is not a feasible - or appropriate - alternative.

As has been demonstrated, however, the design of the Community Forestry Program is not without its shortcomings. One of these is the paradox encountered between the accommodation of flexibility in the implementation of the program's guidelines and the rigidity of the guidelines themselves. The fact that the Community Forestry Program affords a great deal of flexibility in the type of management plans that local users may formulate, illustrates an especially advantageous feature of the program. For example, management plans may be designed to take account of location-specific needs and abilities, an attribute of particular importance in a country as geographically and ethnically diverse as Nepal. At the same time, however, the program has a relatively rigid set of rules and regulations that must be followed before formal authority is handed over to the user groups. Basically, this causes problems as a result of the administrative need to have a single organizational model that is applicable on a national scale. Unfortunately, this relatively rigid model may not be compatible with the situation found in all communities. For example, it was pointed out how it is not uncommon that the forest areas to be handed over and/or the members who combine to make up the user group of a particular forest not correspond to current politico-administrative boundaries. Also, an emphasis on establishing 'formal committees' may not be appropriate in all communities either. Of concern is that this rigidity may prove detrimental to implementation efforts where such (unnecessary) conflicts are created.

As the Community Forestry Program is predicated on the extent to which control over management and use is effectively and thoroughly handed over to forest users, obstacles that impede this devolution of authority are a serious concern to the success of the program. Especially discouraging is the potential for abuse of power among forestry staff. Moreover, the contexts within which this abuse may potentially arise are many.

An important component of the Community Forestry Program, and the hand-over process, is that it involves a close working relationship with members of the forestry bureaucracy; a relationship which has been redefined specifically for this new program. Consequently, the role of the forester is now equated with that of a consultant to the forest users rather than a protector of the forests. This new role for Nepal's foresters has arisen since much of the success of the program hinges on foresters 'handing over' control of forest resources to local people rather than managing and protecting the forests themselves. However, as was illustrated in Chapter Four, the turning over of resources to rural people has been a consistent problem encountered in previous development programs. In fact, it is not at all uncommon that it is not the conservative values of villagers that pose as an obstacle to development, but rather that rural elites sabotage or subvert development programs to serve their own interests. And this is in part due to the fact that there are often no adequate means of monitoring the performance of ministries or administrative personnel in carrying out the directives of the programs (Shrestha 1983: 229). Thus, unless steps are taken to ensure that the 'traditional systems of resource distribution' in the bureaucracy are somehow curtailed, and that measures are put into place to prevent foresters and local elites from sabotaging the program, there may well be serious problems for the program.

An additional aspect of the problem is that both the organization and those who are employed in it have been given the responsibility for divesting control of forests to local communities, when they also represent the interests of those who have the most to gain by maintaining control of forests themselves.[1] Successfully handing over control requires decision-making at a number of levels in the implementation process, ranging from ministerial decisions, decisions of senior bureaucrats in both the Forest Ministry and the Department of Forests, decisions by District Forestry Officers, down to decisions by field staff (Gilmour and Fisher 1991: 183).

> The DFO, whose status and power depend on him maintaining control of forests, is the authority responsible for authorizing forest use, as well as the authority for upholding forest law. The latter authority gives him the power to arrest, prosecute and judge the outcome of any alleged infringement. This is a dangerous combination which lends itself to potential abuse. In this situation officers face a conflict between their responsibilities in community forestry, their legal responsibilities and their personal interest. (Gilmour and Fisher 1991: 191.)

At issue is the fact that it is essentially non-users, most of whom are high-caste political and economic elites, who tend to possess the greatest degree of control over the hand-over process - a process that involves a rather significant degree of administrative and socio-political reform. Examples from the discussion in Chapter Four, of Mihaly's (1965) study, support this concern where they demonstrated the potential problems that may be encountered where the administration has been charged with the responsibility for its own reform.

The simple fact that the Community Forestry Program requires a large degree of political and administrative reform, or 'change', also raises questions about the eventual success of the program. In effect, community forestry by definition involves *changing* the established patterns of power and control over forest resources. Thus, instead of those who are at the top of the social hierarchy (and, incidentally at the top of the government) possessing the greatest degree of power and control, community forestry requires those at the bottom - who tend mostly to be the poor, landless, women, and *low-caste* - be given control (which is an outcome of a western, democratically designed development program). Not only does this require that those who currently possess power relinquish it - which on its own is a very difficult task - they are also, for the most part, high-caste

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[1] A parallel may also be drawn to the 'tree-centered' forestry paradigm which is in much the same position; reluctant to devolve it's position of authority. For instance, difficulty still exists in attempts to overcome "tree-centered forestry", where the foresters are considered to be experts, the focus of 'forestry' is to maintain (or increase) optimal levels of the physical stand, and which fails to look at the wider ecological context in which both people and forests are part of the ecosystem. As Gilmour and Fisher have observed, "the traditional forestry paradigm acts as an ideology which justifies the maintenance of control over forest resources by foresters" (Gilmour and Fisher 1991: 20). This may also impose biases which limit foresters from taking into consideration indigenous management systems.

Hindus whose position at the highest levels of the social structure is religiously legitimized. Moreover, as was suggested in Chapter Four as part of the review of Bista (1990), these 'non-users' also tend to possess values and beliefs, such as fatalism and a hierarchical orientation, which may make it doubly difficult for them to carry out a program that involves changing established patterns of behavior, power and control (or which threaten their vested interests), and which may be perceived as undermining, or antithetical to, the basis of their 'Brahmanistic' belief system. Thus, given the objectives of a primarily 'democratically' designed development program, the institutions and people that have been recruited to spearhead the process of implementation would appear to be far from appropriate.

That many of the problems afflicting the program are quite serious, there is no doubt. Likewise, there is no doubt that the Community Forestry Program has tremendous potential to benefit an extremely large proportion of Nepal's population. However, it is too soon to state emphatically whether or not the Community Forestry Program can overcome some of the problems presented in this thesis. It is with sincere hope that the program will achieve its objectives, yet it is with a hint of realism that one realizes just how much uncertainty the future holds for Nepal and its peoples.

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APPENDIX A: PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Situated in the Himalayan region of South Asia, Nepal lies between India to the South, East and West, and the People's Republic of China (more precisely, the autonomous region of Tibet) to the North. Rectangular in shape, Nepal covers an approximate area of 147,181 sq. km, has an average length (east-west) of 885 km. and an average width of about 193 km. Along its southern border with India, in what constitutes the Terai (plains) region, Nepal lies at a mere 100-200 meters above sea level; and within a distance of as little as 150 km (and in many places even less) reaches to altitudes well in excess of 8000 meters. In fact, Nepal is home to nine of the fourteen 8000 meter plus peaks, including the highest, Mt. Everest.

In simplest terms, Nepal can be characterized by three distinct geographical regions; the Terai (*madhes*), or plains, the Hills (*pahar*), and the Mountains (*himal*). However, it must be pointed out that this simple classification tends to ignore the diversity found within each of these three regions. The three basic regions may be further broken down into the following (moving from south to north and from lower to higher altitudes): Terai, Bhabar, Dun valleys, Siwaliks, Mahabharat Lekh (or sub-Himalaya), Mid valleys (Midlands), Mountains, Inner valleys, Himalaya, Tibetan Plateau (trans-Himalaya).

The Terai, or plains, region lies in the southernmost part of the country and makes up 23.1 percent of the land area of Nepal. A northern extension of the Gangetic plains of India, it consists of a low (approx. 100-200 m above sea level) flat land belt consisting primarily of fertile alluvial soils. Adjoining the Terai to the north, and separating it from the Siwalik hills, is the Bhabar and Dun valleys. Unlike the rich deposits of loam, sandy loam and silt found in the Terai, the Bhabar's more porous alluvial soil contains a greater amount of pebbles and conglomerates. The result is a tendency for water to disappear into the porous material and for the soil to possess a lower degree of fertility. The Siwaliks, the hills and northern belt of the 'Terai' region, rise to heights of between 1000 m, in the east and central part of Nepal, and 1500 m in the west. Similar to the Bhabar soils, the Siwaliks consist of a rather porous gravel type combined with sandy clay loam, loamy sand and sandy soil.

The Hill region is the largest of the three regions and accounts for 41.7 percent of the total area of Nepal. Averaging between 600 m and 2000 m the Hill region consists of the hills (*pahar*) which have no snow and the Mahabharat (*lehk*) which experiences snow in the winter. With a height of between 2000-3000 m above sea level, the Mahabharat Lehk possesses soils consisting mainly of loam, clay, sand, and combinations of the three. As this soil is relatively less porous and more fertile than in the Siwaliks, and conserves a greater percentage of water, the pressure of cultivation is also quite high in this region; a factor which in part accounts for this region having the highest population of the 3 ecological zones.

The Mountain region, making up 35.2 percent of the land area, ranges in altitude from about 3000-3500 m to over 8800 m above sea level. Soils at lower elevations are relatively thin and stony in most places, and for the most part, the mountain region is permanently inhabited only up to about 4000-4500 meters). Also lying within this overall region, is the 'Inner Himalayas,' 10 wide valleys ranging in altitude from 2500-6500 meters above sea level.

The physical geography of Nepal is also greatly affected by three major river systems which flow north to south and perpendicular to the east-west running Terai, Hill, and Mountain regions: the Kosi River, with 7 large tributaries, drains the Eastern Mountains; the Narayani (also refereed to as the Gandak in India) drains the Western/Central Mountains, and; the Karnali (called the Girwa in the Western Terai and the Gorga in India) drains the Far-Western Mountains. The deep gorges produced by these three river systems have created formidable obstacles to communications and have contributed to the virtual isolation of many far-western and upstream settlements.

APPENDIX B: CLIMATE

Like the physical geography of Nepal, the climate is quite variable from region to region. For the most part, Nepal has a monsoon climate, with a pronounced rainfall maximum during the months of June to September - on average about 75-85 percent of the precipitation is confined to this period. These monsoon rains approach from the Bay of Bengal and reach the eastern end of the country first, so that the rains here begin earlier and end later than in the west, and the total rainfall in general is heavier.

In addition to the trend for total rainfall amounts to diminish from east to west, amounts also tend to vary sharply over very short distances due to local topography, so that records compiled at any station may have little relevance to the rainfall received at places even quite close by. The complex arrangement of mountain ridges, resulting in differences in exposure to sunlight and to the moisture-laden monsoon winds, also produces significant climatic differences in adjacent areas. In general, the southern sides of mountain ranges receive a very heavy rainfall. In addition, in areas where the foothills meet the plains there seems to be a substantially higher rainfall than places out in the plains. A good example of this effect is that rainfall at Pokhara is higher than at any other place in Nepal *at which records are kept* . The main cause of this is that each east-west crest-line separates a wetter, south-facing, and a drier, north-facing slope so that moist monsoon air, being forced upwards along the southern faces of the mountains, precipitates much of its moisture. Consequently, when it passes over to the northern sides its moisture content is therefore much reduced, so that rainfall here is much lower. In other words, due to 'rainscreen' effects, rainfall tends to be abundant on south-facing slopes and sparse on north-facing slopes and valleys. Moreover, annual rainfall totals appear to increase with increasing altitude in the Himalaya of central Nepal to about 3,000 m; thereafter, with increasing altitude (and increasing northerly latitude) annual totals diminish. Above about 5,500 m all precipitation is in the form of snow. The most complete topographical barrier, the Greater Himalaya, produces a major rain shadow on its northern side.

In general, the seasonal cycle in Nepal may be summarized as follows: Pre-monsoon (April-May), Monsoon (June-September), Post-monsoon (October-December), and Winter (January-March) (*ibid.*). However, annual temperatures decrease with increases in altitude, and annual rainfall decreases from east to west. Humid tropical climate prevails up to an altitude of 1000 m and is found in the Terai, the Siwalik hills and the Dun--or 'Inner Terai.' Summers are hot and the temperature often exceeds 40°C. Winters are cool with a mean temperature of 12°C. in the west and 15°C. in the east. The

Terai does not receive a uniform amount of rainfall. The eastern Terai has a rainfall of up to 1800mm a year, whereas the western Terai has an annual rainfall of only 900mm. The region that lies between 1000 and 2500m above sea level has a moist subtropical climate. Some of the better known mountain valleys, such as the Kathmandu and Pokhara valleys, along with several others in the midland region, have this kind of climate. Summers are milder than in the Terai, although the maximum temperature can still reach 32°C., and there are frosts at times. Summer rains are heavy, but again, they tend to decrease as one goes west. A temperate climate prevails in the high Himalayan region between 2500 and 4000m. Summers are cool and short. Winters are cold and the night temperature drops below freezing. Summer rainfall is quite heavy and most of the winter precipitation comes in the form of snow. The region above 4000 m has the tundra type of climate. Summers are again cool and short, and winter is severely cold. Day temperatures remain below -5°C. throughout the year. Snow is plentiful, and other characteristics of this high altitude weather are high isolation and strong westerly winds. Speaking in general terms, the mean temperature for the country as a whole is 15°C., increasing as one moves from north to south, and the average annual rainfall is 1500 mm, decreasing as one progresses from east to west. Once again, however, it is important to emphasize that within these four broad climatic zones, there are variations depending upon the location.

APPENDIX C: VEGETATION

Rainfall is a major factor in determining crop pattern as well as the productivity of agriculture in different parts of the country. In general, crops for the *barkhebali* (summer crops), or autumn harvest, are sown when the rains begin around May-June. The chief summer crops are rice, maize, millet and jute. *Hiundebali* (spring/winter) crops are sown when the rains have ended (October-November) and are harvested in February-March. The include wheat, barley, sugarcane, oil seeds, potato and tobacco. Important cash crops in Nepal are jute, sugarcane and tobacco and they accounted for 50 per cent, 38 per cent and 10 per cent of the total land given to cash crops in 1981/82. Food crops account for as much as 87 per cent of the area reported under temporary crops in 1981/82. Over 85 per cent of the total area devoted to the cultivation of food crops is used to grow cereals (Rice is the main crop, accounting for 56 per cent of the area under foodgrains), the remainder is mainly under pulses (for example, soybeans, lentil, gram, peas, etc.). Maize, wheat, and millet, the next most important crops, accounted for 21 per cent, 16 per cent and 6 per cent of the area under food-grains in 1981/82. Maize, the main crop in the Hill, is cultivated together with millet - which is mostly a supplementary crop - while wheat, a relatively new crop in Nepal, is mostly concentrated in the Terai.

With regard to Nepal's forest vegetation, it may be best portrayed by a reconstruction of the natural vegetation belts that range from tropical monsoon rain forest (*Shorea robusta* = sal forests) in the south, through a series of forest belts, to the upper timberline at approximately 4,000-4,500 m. Above this a rhododendron-shrub belt gives out onto alpine meadows, a sub-nival belt of extensive bare ground and scattered dwarf plants, mosses, and lichens, and finally, at 5,500m and above, permanent ice and snow with steep rock outcrops. The following is a summary of the generalized pattern of vegetation belts for the central part of Nepal (which relates to the schematic transect in figure 1 and those in figures 4-6):

Nival belt	above 5,500 meters
Alpine belt	4,500-5,500
Rhododendron-Juniperus belt	3,700-4,500
Betula-Abies belt	2,900-3,700
Acer belt	2,500-2,900
Quercus belt	1,900-2,500
Schima belt	1,000-1,900
Shorea robusta belt	0-1,000

Giving a more detailed account of forest composition and distribution we find that in the Terai sal (*Shorea robusta*) forests predominate and that, reportedly, their composition varies little from east to west throughout Nepal. Sal will not grow on recently formed alluvium nor on waterlogged soil, so that along riversides it is often replaced by tropical deciduous riverain forest. It is only along streams or rivers where riverain types of forest occur or in gullies where tropical evergreen forest grows that the dominance of the sal forest is broken. The Siwalik hills which reach altitudes of 1000 m support forests composed mainly of sal trees, though they are said to be of inferior quality, and *chir* (*Pinus longifolia*). Above 1000 m the sal trees give way to pines intermingled with some oaks; between 1500-2900 m, on the Mahabharat Lekh range, walnuts, horse chestnuts, maples, wild cherry, birches, rhododendrons, larches, firs and some bamboo make their appearance. On moist, southern slopes of the Mountain Region, oaks tend to replace the conifers, while on the shady, drier, northern slopes, both species are usually found. At altitudes of 2100-3300 m, oaks are generally mixed with maple, spruce, fir and bamboo. Fir, rhododendron and birch predominate between 3300-3700 m, and in drier areas, as on the Dhaulagiri massif, juniper, oak and ash are found. Birch continue to appear up to the tree line, at 4000-4500 m. In some areas just below the snowline, at 3700-4500 m, various grasses often provide good grazing grounds in sheltered spots during the short summers. Above 3700 m the stunted vegetation becomes increasingly thin until finally only lichens and mosses clinging to bare rocks remain.

Table A: Main Vegetation Types in Nepal

Area	Elevation (in ft.)	Main Vegetation Types		
		Western	Central	Eastern
Terai, Bhabar, and Dun valleys	Below 1000	- tropical moist deciduous and semi-deciduous. Superior in the east. - new riverine forests of khair, kapok, and sissoo		
	1000	- old riverine forests of simal, karma, siris, bot dongero, and latikarma		
	Above 1000	- sal, giving way to sal and mixed pine higher up.		
Siwaliks	2000 - 4000	- sal and chirpine, some oak		- sub-trop. monsoon forest - bamboo, chestnut, chilaune pandanus
Mahabharat Lekh	3000 - 5000	- hill sal on south slopes - tropical, sub-trop. evergreen on north slopes, khail, deodar	-sal forest	- hill sal on north slopes - pine, larch. oak, magnolia - tropical evergreens
	5000 - 8000	- chirpine giving way to bluepine	- chirpine on north slopes - oaks on south slopes	- pine, larch, magnolia, oak
	8000 - 10,000	- oak predominates throughout, mixed with larch and deciduous		
Midlands (sub-Himalaya or Inner Himalaya		- generally moist, temperate forest, occasionally replaced by junipers, oak, and ash		
	3000 - 6000	- sal and chirpine, blue pine	- sal, giving way to mixed chirpine and oak, then to bluepine, birch, and rhod.	- sal (higher than west)
	6000 - 10,000	- chirpine	- oak, alder, walnut, fir hemlock	- oak, alder rhododendron birch, maple, hemlock - oak and maple predominate above 8000
Great Himalaya	10,000	- khail, spruce, fir, and birch are the predominant tree species throughout - cypress, juniper and birch are the main species higher up		
	10,000 - 13,000	- sal and chirpine cypress	- larch, spruce and	- fir, birch, rhododendron
	13,000 - 14,000	- fir and cedar		- juniper, birch, rhod.
Himalayan Plateau		- alpine vegetation from 13,000 ft to the timberline (14-15,000 ft)		
	13,000 - 14,000	- low rhododendron (in well-drained and humus-rich soil), and scaly juniper (in sunny and dry sites)		
	14,000 - 15,000	- stunted bushes and grass on south-facing slopes; lichen and bear rock on northerly slopes		

Source: Stainton, J.D.A *Forests of Nepal.* London: John Murray Publishers. 1972.

'The more one knows about natives the less can one say what they will or won't do.'

Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*